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AN EVALUATION OF
THE CUMULATIVE
VALUE OF THE
THEORIES REGARDING
THE TEMPORAL
PRIORITY
OF EITHER EZRA OR
NEHEMIAH

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This thesis addresses the long discussed issue of the dating of Ezra's arrival in Jerusalem. It recognises that there is little new evidence to add to the discussion, but considers the evidence from a new perspective, as an overview. The work addresses the inter-relationship of the different issues that are regularly considered. The author recognises that none of the issues under investigation are conclusive, or even particularly persuasive. However, when all the issues are considered together, the author contends that certain mutual exclusivities exist between the conclusions in different sections of the thesis. These require that Ezra arrived in Jerusalem in 458 BCE.

The thesis addresses the issues arising from literary structure, text, and from external or indirect evidence. The individual points in these areas are covered in three chapters, but in independent sections. A brief summary of the conclusions of each section, and how they interrelate with the other sections, is then included at the end of each chapter.

Chapter one deals with introductory issues, thus clearing the ground for actual debate within the following three chapters. The chapter also indicates background issues, which the thesis does not attempt to resolve, particularly the original position of Nehemiah chapter 8. The work continues with the position that a definite location for Nehemiah chapter 8 cannot be determined at present.

Chapter five then draws all the conclusions together, and draws out the implications from comparing individual and independent conclusions. It then suggests which of the dates for Ezra's arrival in Jerusalem are least probable, and by implication, which is most probable from an overview of all the sections. The author contends that recent work on the subject has been focusing too much on the individual sections, so that the larger picture has not been appreciated.

ABBREVIATIONS

Journal Title Abbreviations

AUSS	- Andrews University Seminary Studies
BA	- Biblical Archaeology
BASOR	- Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research
CBQ	- Catholic Biblical Quarterly
ET	- Expository Times
HAT	- Handbuch zum Alten Testament
HSM	- Harvard Semitic Monographs
IEJ	- Israel Exploration Journal
JBL	- Journal of Biblical Literature
JSOT	- Journal for the Study Of the Old Testament
JSOTS	- Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supplement
JSS	- Journal of Semitic Studies
JTS	- Journal of Theological Studies
TB	- Tyndale Bulletin
VT	- Vetus Testamentum
WTJ	- Westminster Theological Journal
ZAW	- Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft

Series and Reference Works Abbreviations

AB	- The Anchor Bible Commentary Series
ANET	- Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating To The Old Testament J.B.Pritchard
BDB	- F. Brown S.R.Driver, and C.A.Briggs <i>Hebrew English Lexicon of the Old Testament</i> (Oxford 1907)
CBC	- The Cambridge Bible Commentary
CUP	- The Cambridge University Press
EB	- T.K.Cheyne and J.S.Black (eds) <i>Encyclopaedia Biblica</i> (London,1903)
GKC	- <i>Gesenius' Hebrew Grammar</i> Ed E.Kautzsch, tr A.E.Cowley (2nd ed. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1910)
ICC	- International Critical Commentary Series
IVP	- Inter Varsity Press
JBC	- Jerome Biblical Commentary
NICOT	- New International Commentary on the Old Testament
NCB	- New Century Bible
OTG	- Old Testament Guides Sheffield Academic Press
OTL	- Old Testament Library
SBLDS	- SBL Dissertation Series
TOTC	- Tyndale Old Testament Commentary Series
WBC	- Word Biblical Commentary Series
Works	- The Works Of Flavius Josephus
WTJ	- Westminster Theological Journal

C O N T E N T S

Introduction

- A. The Thesis
- B. The Aims Of The Thesis
- C. The Proposed Plan Of The Thesis

Chapter One

An Introduction To The Discussion

- A/ A Definition of Terms
- B/ An Historical Survey Of Theories That Have Been Proposed
- C/ The Rationale For The Present Investigation
- D/ The Composition Of The Work Ezra-Nehemiah
- E/ The Methodology Of The Research

Chapter Two

The Implications Of The Literary Structure Of Ezra-Nehemiah For The Dates Of The Two Reformers

- A/ Ezra, Nehemiah, Chronicles as a Complete Work
- B/ The Unity or Diversity of Ezra-Nehemiah
- C/ The Literary Structure of Ezra-Nehemiah
- D/ The Historical Implications Of A United Ezra-Nehemiah

Chapter Three

Specific Biblical Passages Relating To The Dates Of Ezra And Nehemiah

- A/ The importance of Nehemiah's date for Ezra
- B/ The context of the reference to Artaxerxes in Ezra 7:7-8
- C/ The interpretation of Ezra 7.7-8
- D/ Texts which seem to indicate that Ezra-Nehemiah were contemporaries
- E/ The Identity Of Johanan
- F/ The List of names common to both reformers
- G/ A lack of combined activity between the two reformers
- H/ The apparent thirteen year gap in the completion of Ezra's mission
- I/ Nehemiah's reforms are unnecessary if Ezra preceded him
- J/ The powers granted to them both are very similar

- K/ Ezra's apparent failure to complete the wall building
- L/ Ezra's wall around Jerusalem
- M/ The population of Jerusalem

Chapter Four

Evidence For The Dates Of Ezra And Nehemiah Arising From References External To, Or Indirect References Within Ezra-Nehemiah

- A/ Apocrypha
- B/ Josephus
- C/ Elephantine Papyri
- D/ The failed prophecy of Haggai
- E/ The changing Persian attitude to resettlement
- F/ Historical references in the book of Ezra
- G/ The Absence of a governor upon Ezra's arrival in Jerusalem

Chapter Five

Conclusions

- 1/ Firm conclusions
- 2/ The Most Probable Dating scenario
- 3/ Areas for further study

INTRODUCTION

A. The Thesis

Within the books of Ezra and Nehemiah, many questions have been debated over the past century, and none more so than the question of the relative dates assigned to Ezra and Nehemiah. None of these debates have produced decisive conclusions. This thesis evaluates the cumulative value of the different theories suggesting that if all the issues are taken together, a clear conclusion is achievable.

B. The Aims Of The Thesis

- i. To introduce and define the area of debate concerning the relative dating of the two reformers.
- ii. To assess the relative strengths and weaknesses of each individual issue.
- iii. To assess the cumulative evidence for the dating of Ezra and Nehemiah
- iv. To try and reconstruct the most reasonable historical order for Ezra-Nehemiah based on an examination of all the evidence.

C. The Proposed Plan Of The Thesis

Chapter One outlines:

- i. A definition of terms.
- ii. An historical survey of the theories that have been proposed.
- iii. A rationale for the present investigation.
- iv. The composition of the work of Ezra-Nehemiah
- v. The methodology that will be employed

Chapter Two discusses the implications of the literary structure of Ezra-Nehemiah for the dates of the two reformers

Chapter Three examines the evidence that arises directly from the biblical text

Chapter Four examines the evidence that arises from outside the biblical text, and that which is suggested from indirect references within Ezra-Nehemiah

Chapter Five draws the conclusions from each section together, and produces an overall assessment of the probability of each of the potential dates for Ezra and Nehemiah's arrival. It will then indicate the most probable order of events, before finally indicating areas of further study.

At the end of each chapter, the relative strengths and weaknesses of each line of evidence will be summarised. Then the significance of any inter-relationships will be indicated. Then in the final chapter, each of these summarising sections will be collated, and a final consideration of the inter-relationships will be made. Finally a conclusion will be reached, about the relative dates of Ezra and Nehemiah.

CHAPTER ONE

An Introduction To The Discussion

The work begins with a definition of the term 'Ezra', for there are alternate possibilities. It then surveys the various theories proposed about the relative ordering of the two reformers, to produce a range of suggested possible dates for Ezra and Nehemiah's arrival in Jerusalem. The discussion then moves on to a rationale for the present investigation. Then the structure of the work Ezra-Nehemiah will be defined, before finally, the methodology adopted in the thesis is considered.

SECTION A

A Definition Of Terms

Confusion can arise regarding the identification of the work 'Ezra'. In the Greek form 'Esdras', the word is not only the title for the book Ezra in the Hebrew canon, but also of several extra books in the Greek translation of the Hebrew scriptures (the Septuagint - LXX). In the LXX there are three books called Esdras, only one of which parallels the Hebrew book Ezra, while the Vulgate has 4 books called Esdras, only one of which parallels the Hebrew Ezra.

A chart can best clarify the relationship of the various titles.

ENGLISH	Ezra	Nehemiah	1 Esdras	2 Esdras
LXX	Esdras Beta	Esdras Gamma	Esdras Alpha
VULGATE	1 Esdras	2 Esdras	3 Esdras	4 Esdras

To avoid confusion, there is a need to standardise terms. Within this thesis, the English terms in the above table will be used.

SECTION B

An Historical Survey Of Theories Proposed For The Date Of Arrival Of Ezra And Nehemiah

There are several questions within the chronological puzzle of Ezra and Nehemiah's work. These will be examined in detail within the body of the thesis. However, there is one issue that is particularly complex, and fundamental, which will receive special treatment here. That is, the precise chronological order of Ezra's and Nehemiah's initial arrival in Jerusalem.

On a simple surface reading of the books, it appears that Ezra came to Jerusalem to undertake his work before that of Nehemiah. The reference in Ezra 7:7-8 appears to place Ezra's arrival in 458 BCE.¹ Nehemiah's date, from Nehemiah 2:12 correspondingly, appears to be 445 BCE. However, this is not the consensus today, and there has been a long debate over the issue. This debate arises out of perceived difficulties in the text, which suggest that Ezra did not arrive before Nehemiah. Many difficulties are cited, and some of the more common and significant ones are as follows:

- * the 13 silent years between Ezra's coming and Ezra's reading of the Law referred to in Nehemiah 8.
- * the lack of combined activity reported between the two reformers
- * the relationship between individuals such as Johanan and Meremoth with Ezra and Nehemiah

Little more than a century ago there was no room for debate over the relative dating of the two reformers. Ezra was universally held to have come before Nehemiah. The Spence & Exell Pulpit Commentary of 1880 illustrates this when it says³

"The book of Ezra is a work of so simple a character as scarcely to require an introduction. It is a plain and straightforward account of one of the most important events in Jewish history - the return of the people of God from the Babylonian captivity".

However, biblical scholarship has moved on in its approach to the study and analysis of the biblical text. There has also been ongoing archaeological research and a wider study of the biblical text and its formulation as a whole. This has led to the rise of difficulties with

¹Ezra - from verse 6 came up to Jerusalem in the seventh year of King Artaxerxes. The seventh year of Artaxerxes I, was 458 BCE

²In the month Nisan, in the 20th year of King Artaxerxes. The twentieth year of Artaxerxes I was 445 BCE.

³Spence and Exell *Pulpit Commentary* i

the traditional position mentioned above. Therefore concerning the relative dating of Ezra and Nehemiah, there are now several possible scenarios.

1. Ezra's arrival in 458 BCE.

"The superficial reading of the books of Ezra and Nehemiah would seem to leave the matter in no doubt. Ezra came to Jerusalem in the seventh year of Artaxerxes, while Nehemiah received the royal authority to go to Jerusalem in the twentieth year of Artaxerxes, and apparently, in the same year Ezra publicly read the law in the presence of Nehemiah. It would seem to be clear, therefore, that the work of Ezra lay before that of Nehemiah in the reign of the same monarch." (Rowley)⁴

This traditional approach has been followed through the centuries, and is still acceptable to many (e.g. Fensham)⁵. It places Ezra as coming to Jerusalem in 458 BCE ahead of Nehemiah who arrived in 445 BCE. The traditional view is still held by many, including Clines, Williamson, Yamauchi, and McFall (though he argues that Nehemiah also came in 458 BCE).⁶ The main evidence for this position is as follows:

- the time reference in Ezra 7:7-8, using the name Artaxerxes without further identification, in a context where the reference suggests Artaxerxes I.
- the chronological presentation in the work of the Chronicler
- the lack of any conclusive textual evidence to indicate any contrary reading of the surface meaning of the text
- the apparent contemporaneity of Ezra and Nehemiah

2. Ezra's arrival in 398 BCE.

This was first proposed in 1889 by Vernes, followed closely by Van Hoonacker in 1890 working independently. They hypothesised that Ezra came to Jerusalem in the seventh year of Artaxerxes II's reign in 398 BCE, which inferred that Ezra came a generation after Nehemiah. This theory resolves many of the above difficulties, whilst also, fitting the time-reference in Ezra 7:7 dating Ezra to the seventh year of the reign of Artaxerxes (in this case taken to be Artaxerxes II). This position therefore has Ezra arriving in Jerusalem in 398, after Nehemiah's arrival in 445 BCE. This position is advocated by, e.g. Rowley, and Emerton.⁷

⁴H.H.Rowley *Servant of The Lord* 137

⁵F.C.Fensham *The Books of Ezra and Nehemiah* 9

⁶D.J.A.Clines *Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther* 21

H.G.M.Williamson *Ezra, Nehemiah* xliv

E.M.Yamauchi 'The Reverse Order of Ezra-Nehemiah Reconsidered' *Themelios* 7-13

L.McFall 'Was Nehemiah Contemporary With Ezra In 458 BC ?' *WTJ* 263-293

⁷H.H.Rowley *Servant of the Lord* 139-142

J.A.Emerton 'Did Ezra go to Jerusalem in 428 B.C.?' *JTS* 1-19

3. Ezra's arrival in 428 BCE.

By the beginning of the 20th Century, another theory was proposed, that Ezra came to Jerusalem in the reign of Artaxerxes I (but the thirty seventh year - Bright, Anderson, Freedman, and Noth).⁸ According to this view, Ezra visited Jerusalem in 428 BCE, during, or shortly after Nehemiah's second term of office in Jerusalem.

This approach, while based on an emendation, considerably simplifies the reading of the text, and answers most of the difficulties raised previously. The assumed contemporary ministries of Ezra and Nehemiah can then be reconstructed as Cheyne⁹ suggests.

1. Nehemiah came to Jerusalem in 445 and rebuilt and consecrated the city wall. (Nehemiah 1:1-7)
2. On a second visit in 433 on his return, he came forward as an ecclesiastical reformer (Nehemiah 13:4-31)
3. Not long afterwards, the date in Ezra 7:7 being incorrect, Ezra arrived in Jerusalem with his band of exiles. Perceiving that his compatriots had been intermarrying with their heathen neighbours, he endeavoured, albeit in vain, to dissolve the mixed marriages.
4. Upon this, under the joint leadership of Ezra and Nehemiah, a great assembly was held at which the Jews separated themselves from the other peoples, and thus the congregation was constituted.
5. Into the congregation thus formed, the new law was shortly afterwards introduced. (Nehemiah 8)

This creates a tidy framework of historical events that is lacking in the more traditional approach. It also resolves some of the apparent difficulties of the traditional approach (such as the 13 silent years of Ezra). However, to adopt this view, it is necessary to assume that the text of Ezra 7:7 is corrupt, and that the books of Ezra and Nehemiah need reordering in places (for example in Nehemiah 8).

The necessary change in the text of Ezra 7:7 is minor, requiring a scribal error to have been made, changing the 7th year (בשנת שבע) to the 37th year (בשנת שלשים ושבע). Bright¹⁰ says in defence of this change,

"One dislikes 'dodges'; but the emendation is not improbable, for it requires one only to suppose that three consecutive occurrences of an initial *shin*, have caused one word to be dropped by haplography."

(See a discussion of this idea in chapter 3 section B, where the term 'parablepsis' is used instead of the less accurate 'haplography'.)

⁸J. Bright *History of Israel* 381

B.W. Anderson *The Living World of the Old Testament* 448

D.N. Freedman 'The Chroniclers Purpose' *CBQ* 436-442

M. Noth *History of Israel* 319

⁹T.K. Cheyne *Encyclopaedia Biblica* 1487

¹⁰J. Bright *History of Israel* 402

Others have suggested variations on this proposal, with Ezra arriving in the 32nd year (Kosters¹¹), or the 27th year of Artaxerxes I (Bruce).¹² These variations, while having the same kind of advantages as a date in the 37th year of Artaxerxes, require greater textual changes in Ezra 7:7 (7 changing to 32). This further requirement of emendation renders the theoretical date still less likely, and so, while possible, this date will be treated as indistinguishable from the 27th and 37th year of Artaxerxes I.

4. Ezra's arrival in 443 BCE

This has been proposed by Demsky on the basis that the books of Ezra and Nehemiah use different calendrical systems, a priestly and a civil one respectively. Demsky¹³ suggests that

“Nehemiah counts the years according to the reign of his monarch, while Ezra follows the traditional Torah method of sabbatical cycles.”

Demsky¹⁴ shows that the practice of sabbatical cycle calculations is well attested in biblical and apocryphal literature, commenting that

“the Chronicler already uses the theme in his midrashic explanation of Jeremiah's prophecy of seventy years of desolation (II Chron. 36:21 cf. Lev. 26:24)”

His suggestion means that while Nehemiah's date can be calculated from the regnal years of the kings of Persia, Ezra's cannot. Demsky recognises that Ezra 7:7-8 contains an expression linking them to the regnal years of Persia, but considers that this could be a later redaction, or copyist's error¹⁵. If Ezra 7:7's reference to the seventh year meant sabbatical year, then the precise date, (within a band of seven) can be fixed provided one sabbatical year is known. Demsky¹⁶ suggests that

“The earliest documented sabbatical year is the fall 164 to the summer 163 BCE, when Lysias besieged Beth-sur (1 Macc. 6:49,53: Josephus, Antiquities 12:378)”

Having removed the reference to the reign of Artaxerxes I; Demsky then suggests sabbatical years that might best fit his understanding of the order of Ezra-Nehemiah. As he considers that the two men were contemporaries, and also considers that Nehemiah

¹¹W.H.Kosters *“Die Wiederherstellung Israels in der persischen Period”* 25

¹²F.F.Bruce *Israel And The Nations* 107-108

¹³A.Demsky ‘Who Came First, Ezra or Nehemiah ?’ *HUCA* 11

¹⁴‘Who Came First, Ezra or Nehemiah ?’ *HUCA* 14

¹⁵‘Who Came First, Ezra or Nehemiah ?’ *HUCA* 11

¹⁶ ‘Who Came First, Ezra or Nehemiah ?’ *HUCA* 14

came to Jerusalem in 445 BCE, he goes for the sabbatical year that is closest to, but slightly after that date. This leads him to fall 444 to summer 443 BCE for Ezra's arrival. He says that

"According to the Synchronistic Approach, Ezra came at the end of a seventh year on the first day of the fifth month (Ab), i.e. August, 443 BCE".

However, he also accepts that 458 BCE is also a Sabbath year, though he neglects to mention that 401, or 394 are also sabbatical years. His date of 443 therefore while interesting, is based on a hypothetical emendation of Ezra 7:7-8, his own presupposed position that Ezra and Nehemiah were contemporaries, and his identification of the time reference as a Sabbath year reference. For the purpose of this thesis, this date can be considered along with the 428/438 BCE dates. They all assume approximately the same thing - namely that Ezra 7:7-8 is corrupt, and that Ezra came after, but contemporaneously with Nehemiah.

5. Ezra and Nehemiah's dates have been transposed.

In a further approach Jellicoe¹⁷ suggested that Nehemiah's dates should be exchanged with those of Ezra. This makes Nehemiah arrive in the 7th year of Artaxerxes I, and Ezra in the 20th year. This was a novel approach, but one requiring a wholesale reorganisation of the texts of Ezra and Nehemiah.

6. Ezra was the fictional creation of the editor.

The proposal that Ezra was a figment of the imagination of the Chronicler and never really existed at all, was first made by Renan in 1893 and followed shortly by Torrey.¹⁸ This position was never very popular, and calls into question areas of study that are beyond the basic assumptions made within this study. Therefore this theory will not be considered.

Summary

There are effectively three main time periods in which Ezra could have come to Jerusalem namely, 458, 438 (plus or minus 10 years) or 398 BCE. These are the three dates that will form the variables in the discussion of the following chapters.

¹⁷S. Jellicoe 'Nehemiah-Ezra a Reconstruction' *ET* 54

¹⁸C.C. Torrey *Ezra Studies* xv

SECTION C

The Rationale For The Present Investigation

1. A Cumulative Approach

It is apparent from the varied hypotheses listed above, that much work has been done on this area over many years. The subject has been well rehearsed, but remains inconclusive. There has, however, been no attempt known to the author, to draw together the different strands of argument, to discover an overall picture from the mass of detail. The problem is akin to being unable to see the wood for the trees.

2/ Calls For Revaluation

There has been a growing body of literature¹⁹ that has called for a revaluation of the relative dating of Ezra's and Nehemiah's arrival in Jerusalem. This has been for the following considerations.

i. change in methodology

Part of the reason for this call for re-evaluation has been due to a change in the approach to biblical studies in the last 20 years. There has been less emphasis on the historical, in favour of the theological, and especially the literary impact of the works. Johnstone²⁰ says

"perceptions have been changing. 'History' has begun to loosen its hold on the claim to be the supreme category of interpretation and vehicle of truth. The recreation of the 'original event' as the goal of criticism has proved to be not only elusive, but illusory."

Greater weight therefore needs to be attached to the consideration of literary issues within the books, than has been given previously. The books need to be considered more as a complete product (synchronic), and not just as the end of a detailed process of historical editorial work (diachronic). This in turn will shift attention away from the emphasis on textual historical detail, and on to the overall message of the author, or on that received by the reader. Therefore issues that once weighed little in the discussion over the relative dating of Ezra and Nehemiah's arrival in Jerusalem, now assume greater importance.

These changes move away from many of the presuppositions of historical source criticism, upon which much of the previous research was based, thus adding new dimensions to the study. Nevertheless, this should not negate the value of (the older) historical approaches. Blenkinsopp²¹ says that

¹⁹e.g. E.M.Yamauchi 'The Reverse Order Of Ezra-Nehemiah Reconsidered' *Themelios* 3

²⁰W.Johnstone 'Which is the Best Commentary' *ET* 97

²¹J.Blenkinsopp *Ezra-Nehemiah* 41-42

"The canonical form of the material ... is a theological or ideological construct. In other words it is one possible interpretation of the events described and, whatever its authority, it is not immune to challenge by alternative explanations from historical-critical perspectives."

ii. Theological Unity of Ezra Nehemiah and Chronicles

A second reason for re-examining the issue arises from the first. Literary criticism has developed a focus on the literary or theological unity of the books of Ezra and Nehemiah on the one hand, and between Ezra-Nehemiah and Chronicles on the other. This opens a relatively new line of discussion that has not been considered in older issues. This is discussed further in chapter 2 sections B and C.

iii. Archaeological Discoveries

A third reason for reconsidering the issues lies in the discoveries made in archaeology, for instance, the discovery of the Samaria Papyri. One fruit of archaeological study has been a development in the discussion about the role of governor in the province of Judea. This follows the discovery of jar handles using the title governor linked to hitherto unknown names,²² and it opens up the possibility of redefining the date of Ezra. This particular example will be discussed in chapter 4 section H.

²²N. Avigad *Bullae and Seals from a Post Exilic Judean Archive* 52-58

SECTION D

The Composition Of The Work Ezra-Nehemiah

The work Ezra-Nehemiah as seen in the present texts is inevitably the result of an editor. This is apparent, at the very least, because Ezra 1 relates events from 538 BCE under the leadership of Zerubbabel, while Nehemiah 1 relates events in 445 BCE.²³ These texts are too far apart for there to have been one leader living and working through the entire period, recording it for posterity. The extent of this editorial work is considered here.

1. The Sources Of Ezra And Nehemiah

Ezra-Nehemiah is made up of several sources as indicated below. These have been interwoven to present a coherent picture. The composition of the work needs close consideration because the way that these sources have been linked by the editor has implications for the dating of Ezra and Nehemiah. This will be considered more closely throughout chapter 2.

i. Early Records Relating To The Return Of The Jews

It is generally agreed that the editor drew on various source documents to compile Ezra 1-6. The editor used Aramaic documents to produce Ezra 4:6-6:22²⁴. Further, the editor drew on Temple archives to form the list of returning exiles in Ezra 2.²⁵ He also drew on the list of Temple vessels to form Ezra 1:9-11.²⁶ There are therefore several early source documents that were employed. The decree of Cyrus in Ezra 1:2-4 is more controversial. It could either be a source document, or possibly a document resulting from editorial work based on an Aramaic original related more accurately in Ezra 6:3-5. Clines²⁷ accepts the possibility that v.3b-4 dealing with the repatriation of the Jews (not in the edict of 6:3-5), is a Jewish expansion of the original text. A further peculiarity is that the decree is written in Hebrew, rather than Aramaic, which is employed in 6:3-5. It also appears to be very Jewish in its phraseology (for example, the term 'the Lord the God of Israel' is used in v.3). Further, there is no evidence that the Persian Emperors ever referred to themselves as 'King of Persia', which is how the decree phrases the title. However, though these points sound conclusive, many scholars now suggest the authenticity of this, and many Aramaic sections, as authentic sources that the editor used, on well-discussed grounds.²⁸

²³ignoring for the moment the date of Ezra's work

²⁴H.G.M. Williamson *Ezra and Nehemiah* 31

²⁵H.G.M. Williamson *Ezra and Nehemiah* 31

²⁶H.G.M. Williamson *Ezra and Nehemiah* 30

²⁷D.J. Clines *Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther* 36

²⁸For a fuller rehearsal of the discussion, see E.J. Bickerman *The Edict of Cyrus in Ezra* 1 249-275

ii. Temple Archives.

Williamson²⁹ identifies these as the source of the statistical lists of returning exiles given regularly throughout Ezra-Nehemiah. Ezra 2 is relevant here, though lists of names also appear later, in Ezra chapter 8, and 10:18-43 as well as in Nehemiah 7:6-73. Such lists would be inappropriate in the memoirs, but necessary to the later editor's purpose, and so included. There is also a list of Temple vessels that appears to underlie Ezra 1:9-11³⁰ The editor therefore included them in his work where appropriate to his structure. Clines³¹ says

"There are a number of lists which did not belong to any of the Chronicler's main sources and were probably obtained by him or a later editor of Ezra-Nehemiah from Temple archives".

There are several examples of these lists occurring through the work.

- a. Ezra 1:9-11a a list of Temple vessels
- b. Ezra 2 and Nehemiah 7, being an apparently duplicated list of names of returning exiles.
- c. Ezra 8:1-14 a list of those who returned from exile.
- d. Ezra 10:18-44 the list of the men who married foreign wives.
- e. Nehemiah 3:1-32 the list of builders of the wall.
- f. Nehemiah 10:1-27 the list of those that 'set their seal to the covenant'.
- g. Nehemiah 11:3-19 the list of the leading men of Judah and Benjamin, and their families.
- h. Nehemiah 11:25-36 a list of towns in Palestine occupied by the Judahites, and Benjaminites.
- i. Nehemiah 12:1-9 A list of priests and Levites
- j. Nehemiah 12:12-21 A list of the heads of the families from the previous list.
- k. Nehemiah 12:24-26 A list of the Levite heads of families.

iii. An Aramaic Memoir

The passage from Ezra 4:8 - 6:18 and 7:12-26 is largely made up of official documents, with only twelve³² out of a total sixty-seven verses being narrative interweaving the official records of letters. Those verses are considered to be the product of the editor, structuring

Also H.G.M. Williamson *Ezra and Nehemiah* 33-34

²⁹H.G.M. Williamson *Ezra, Nehemiah* xxiv

³⁰L.H. Brockington *Ezra Nehemiah and Esther* 34-35

³¹D.J. Clines *Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther* 9

³²4:8, 11, 23, 24 5:1-6 6:1-2

the source documents.³³ The authenticity of these verses is uncertain, but has been well debated elsewhere.³⁴

iv. The Ezra Memoirs

Ezra 7-10 is set apart from the rest of the work stylistically, in its use of the first person singular, interspersed with third person singular narration. This passage is usually considered to be Ezra's memoir upon which the editor drew when compiling the work. The 'memoirs' are usually thought to consist of the 'I' 'we' passages, around which the editor wove his work.

The passages that refer to Ezra in the first person, are Ezra 7:27 - 8: 34, and 9:3-15. Chapter 8 appears to be a Jewish list³⁵, and Ezra 7:11-26 an Aramaic letter³⁶. Additional material stylistically similar, and possibly from a similar source, but representing Ezra in the 3rd person singular occurs in Ezra 7:1-10 and 9:1-10:44. These, sections in the third person, might have been by the compiler of the book. Williamson³⁷ considers that the

"editor, working on an original first person account by Ezra, changed some passages into the third person. He no doubt considered that it was appropriate to introduce Ezra in this way (7.1-10). He then used the words of Ezra's benediction (7.27-28) as a skilful way to slip over into the first person."

While this is possible, the stylistic similarities between the first and third person narratives also have to be considered. Anderson³⁸ shows that settled conclusions are difficult when he says that

"It is difficult to determine how much of the Ezra narrative (Ezra 7:11 - 10:24; and Neh 7:73^b - 9:5) belongs to the Ezra memoirs."

Whatever finally becomes identified with the Ezra memoirs, and whatever becomes labelled as later editorial insertions, it is nevertheless true that chapters 7-10 do form an identifiable unit, distinct from chapters 1-6. They appear to be based upon Ezra's memoirs, around which the editor has woven his work.

v. The Nehemiah Memoirs

The memoirs of Nehemiah form the basis of the book Nehemiah, with certain exceptions (the lists mentioned above, drawn from the Temple records). Here the first person narrative runs from Nehemiah 1:1 to 7:5, and then again from 12:31 to 13:31; the latter

³³L.H.Brockington *Ezra, Nehemiah and Esther* 26

³⁴E.J.Bickerman *The Edict of Cyrus in Ezra* 1 249-275

H.G.M.Williamson *Ezra and Nehemiah* 33-34

D.J.Clines *Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther* 8

³⁵D.Kidner *Ezra and Nehemiah* 135

³⁶D.Kidner *Ezra and Nehemiah* 135

³⁷H.G.M.Williamson *Ezra and Nehemiah* 24

³⁸B.W.Anderson *The Living World of the Old Testament* 434 fn.6

verses being introduced by 12:27-30, which is seen as an editorial introduction. Brockington³⁹ sees a distinct style running through the memoir. Clines⁴⁰ suggests that

"This first-person narrative is unique in the Old Testament as an indisputably authentic record made by a leading statesman about affairs he was personally involved in."

In the centre of these memoirs however are chapters 8-10, which relate to Ezra's work. Brockington⁴¹ considers that the editor (in his case Chronicler) placed these chapters here as his

"own reconstruction of what he thought ought to have taken place. "

This issue will be considered in more detail in point vi.

vi. Nehemiah Chapters 8-10

These particular chapters are very significant for the debate over the precedence of either Ezra or Nehemiah, because the presence of chapters 8-10 in Nehemiah suggests that the two reformers were contemporaries. Blenkinsopp considers that chapters 8-10 of Nehemiah belong to the Ezra memoir, reporting the activity of Ezra. If this is the case, then the editing of them into the Nehemiah memoir suggests a deliberate editorial attempt to convey the impression that the two reformers were contemporaries. Blenkinsopp⁴² discussing the location of Nehemiah 8 in the Nehemiah passage, says that

"Nehemiah 8 also belongs to the Ezra narrative, and its relocation at this point is generally attributed to an editor for whom Ezra and Nehemiah were simultaneously present and active in Jerusalem."

From a literary viewpoint, Batten⁴³ suggests that Nehemiah 8-10 best fits the context of Ezra 10, and the close of Ezra's work. This is because he suggests that the work of Ezra-Nehemiah initially followed a neat schema that had the work of the three great reformers (Zerubbabel, Ezra, and Nehemiah) paralleling each other and successfully concluding their projects despite opposition. Coggins and Knibb⁴⁴ comment on this, that

"The book of Ezra ends with an account of the carrying out of the measures for the purification of the community. In that context it appears to be a peculiarly lame conclusion; here the source is closely followed, but a different impression is created by the fact that an account of the law-reading immediately follows."

Brockington⁴⁵ also feels that this is a suitable place for the text of Nehemiah 8-10 to have occurred originally. He⁴⁶ further feels that the references in Nehemiah 9:1,2 relate to a

³⁹L.H.Brockington *Ezra, Nehemiah and Esther* 28

⁴⁰D.J.Clines *Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther* 4

⁴¹L.H.Brockington *Ezra, Nehemiah and Esther* 28

⁴²J.Blenkinsopp *Ezra-Nehemiah* 44

⁴³L.W.Batten *Ezra and Nehemiah* 352

⁴⁴R.J.Coggins and M.J.Knibb *1 & 2 Esdras* 70

⁴⁵L.H.Brockington *Ezra, Nehemiah and Esther* 28

fast day, and those in Nehemiah 9:38 to a covenant made to perpetuate the arrangement made by Ezra in Ezra chapter 10. They therefore form further links with the ending of the Ezra memoirs. Additionally, there is a question over the linking of Nehemiah 7:73b, and Nehemiah 8:2. Nehemiah 7:73b refers to the seventh month where Israel had finally settled into their towns scattered through Israel. Chapter 8 verse 2 opens with the next event, which has a large crowd gathering from all Israel on the first day of the seventh month.⁴⁷ This crowd has apparently been gathered in a very short space of time. Williamson⁴⁸ considers this to be a sign that the two passages do not link historically⁴⁹, but that rather Nehemiah 8:2 refers to the separate ministry of Ezra upon his arrival. While this stands as good evidence suggesting a historical discontinuity, it assumes that the crowd that gathers in Nehemiah 8:1 is the population drawn from the whole land of Israel. While described as 'all' this crowd is clearly not the total Israelite population. Indeed, Nehemiah 8:2-3 refers to Ezra speaking only to those who could understand. This is clearly one limiting factor to that 'all'. It is possible that the congregation here was mainly local, augmented by particularly devout Jews. For them, the 6 day gap (to return home and settle before setting out once more) from the completion of the wall (Nehemiah 6:15 c.f. Nehemiah 8:2) to this was not an intolerable burden. By Nehemiah 8:13, the second day of the month, the crowd has grown with more Jews returning for the festival. Indeed, by this time all the main family heads had returned. Therefore, while this could point to a historical discontinuity, this is not a certain application of the text.

Looking outside the Hebrew Bible, there is some further support for moving Nehemiah 8 into the book of Ezra. For example, in 1 Esdras, the Nehemiah 8 passage comes immediately after the close of Ezra (10:44) after the account detailing the purifying of the community. This suggests that there was an early tradition placing Nehemiah 8-10 within the Ezra memoirs, thus isolating the work of the two reformers. In addition there is further support in the writings of Josephus, which is discussed in detail in chapter four.

However, Nehemiah 8-10 may be located after Ezra 10, but also after Ezra 8, i.e. up to four and a half months after his arrival⁵⁰ (Ch 9 is four and a half months later). This according to Williamson⁵¹ is due to the following observations.

"Ezra came to Jerusalem specifically to present and teach the law, so that a reading of the law ought to come early in Ezra's ministry; that the dates in the

⁴⁶L.H.Brockington *Ezra, Nehemiah and Esther* 28

⁴⁷L.H.Brockington *Ezra, Nehemiah and Esther* 163

⁴⁸H.G.M.Williamson *Ezra, Nehemiah* 286

⁴⁹ though he considers the possibility that they have been linked for literary purposes by the original editor

⁵⁰H.G.M.Williamson *Ezra and Nehemiah* 23

⁵¹H.G.M.Williamson *Ezra and Nehemiah* 39-40

Ezra material fit smoothly in sequence on this view ... and that Ezra 9 seems to presuppose knowledge of the law by the people"

This could suggest a date of 438 BCE for Ezra's arrival in Jerusalem. Further, it does simplify the accounts of Ezra's ministry. It means that Ezra could have discharged the whole of his commission in one year, and all the events would then fit into one calendar year, from time references in the passage.

The scheme of things would then look something as follows:

Ezra 7:9	1st month travelling, with the arrival in Jerusalem on the 5th month
Nehemiah 8:2	law reading on the 7th month
Nehemiah 8:13-18	feasting on the 7th month
Nehemiah 9:1	fasting day 24th of the 7th month
Ezra 10:9	assembly 20th of the 9th month
Ezra 10:16-17	tribunal sits 1st of the 10th month until the 1st of the 1st month the following year.

The solution is so simple that it has been widely accepted without further question. It answers many difficulties of the traditional 458 BCE date for Ezra's arrival, and removes the question of the 13 year gap in the completion of Ezra's mission.

However, in the Hebrew Bible, Nehemiah 8-10 appears in the book of Nehemiah. The text itself does not indicate any need of rearrangement, and there is no hint in Nehemiah 8 that it is misplaced. Indeed, it fits its present context in Nehemiah as well as it might in any passage in Ezra. Further, a removal of Ch 8 from its present context in Nehemiah, would also upset other arrangements in the book of Nehemiah. For example, the literary structure from Nehemiah 8 to the dedication of the wall in Ch 12 relies on the current location of Nehemiah 8-10. This is seen for example in the structure that Eskenazi⁵² proposes for the books of Ezra and Nehemiah.

- First Ezra-Nehemiah shifts the focus from leaders to the participating community (Ezra 7:1-10:44).
- Second Ezra-Nehemiah expands the concept of the house of God from the Temple to be replaced by the City (Nehemiah 1:1-7:5).
- Third, Ezra-Nehemiah emphasises the priority of the written text over the oral as a source of authority (Nehemiah 7:6-13:30)."

There are further difficulties in moving this passage out of the book of Nehemiah. For instance, the reforms of Nehemiah mentioned in chapter 13 appear to be based on the covenantal promises made in Nehemiah 10 including:

- v. 30 not to allow their children to intermarry with the settled population

⁵²T.C.Eskenazi *In an Age of Prose* 95

- v. 31 not to buy or sell on the Sabbath, nor allow the people of the land to do so.
- v. 32 to pay the taxes to YHWH
- v. 35 to bring the offerings of first fruits into the Temple

The reforms in chapter 13 then deal with these issues.

- v. 11 the Tithe was to be collected, and properly administered.
- v. 12 the offering of the first fruits was also gathered
- v. 15-16 the people were to stop trading and working in Jerusalem especially on the Sabbath.
- v. 23 to stop the problems of intermarriage with the Ashdodites

It appears that the reforms of Ch 13 are a direct application of the covenant made in chapter 10. While this does not necessarily prove that the two passages are chronologically close, it does suggest an editorial dependence of Nehemiah 13 on Nehemiah 10.

Therefore, though the moving of Nehemiah 8-10 appears to ease the difficulties in the book of Ezra, the book of Nehemiah appears to require the chapters as has been demonstrated above. There appear to be good historical reasons for including Nehemiah 8 (and possibly 9-10) within the Ezra account, while the literary considerations suggest that the text makes most sense in its present location.

The relationship between the literary, and historical influences will be explored more fully in chapter two section C. However, for the purposes of this thesis, Nehemiah 8-10 will be treated as a variable, of undetermined location.

2. The Editorial Structure

One of the most recent approaches to interpreting Ezra-Nehemiah is to recognise that the book has an overall structure. The identification of such a literary structure raises further issues for the relative dating of Ezra and Nehemiah. This is because the works of Ezra and Nehemiah are seen to be welded together into a deliberately structured and significant whole, culminating in the restored worship in Jerusalem, by the restored nation of Israel. In the words of Eskenazi⁵³

"What began at different times and in different places, with different people, now converges in Jerusalem. The movements come together, flow into a grand symphonic finale, replaying the individual motifs and instruments of earlier movements in a fullness of polyphonic orchestration".

⁵³T.C.Eskenazi *In an Age of Prose* 95

The intention of the editor in creating this structure is important, as that will determine how he treats his source documents, and the structure he produces with them. This structure will be investigated and a possible outline identified in chapter 2 section C.

3. The Identity And Scope Of The Editor.

The identity of the editor of the work Ezra-Nehemiah determines the date and agenda for his editorial work, and sets the framework for study within this area.

A figure often associated with the books of Ezra and Nehemiah is 'The Chronicler' (e.g. Talshir, Noth).⁵⁴ He is defined as the editor of I and II Chronicles. It has often been hypothesised that he continued the history into the books of Ezra and Nehemiah. This is based in particular on stylistic grounds. The date for his activity is approximately 300 BCE though the date varies from a first edition late in the 6th century (Cross)⁵⁵, to later than 300 BCE. Batten⁵⁶ says that

"it is quite impossible to place the work earlier than 300 BC"

If he is the editor of the work Ezra-Nehemiah, then his theological agenda can be deduced from wider sources than Ezra-Nehemiah, drawing also from evidence within the book of Chronicles.

However, the identification of the editor of Ezra-Nehemiah with the Chronicler is not certain, and there are a range of alternative opinions. At one extreme, it is held that Ezra was the editor, and Nehemiah's work had been recorded separately. The other extreme suggests that the whole is a fictional composition, referring to⁵⁷

"The Chronicler's creation of the character of Ezra"

There are many shades of opinion between these two positions, varying in the amount of editorial work done, and the date in which it was done. For example, Blenkinsopp⁵⁸ argues for common authorship, and Johnstone⁵⁹ who will

"acknowledge that by 'author' one cannot mean a single individual but the work of a school, perhaps over a number of generations."

⁵⁴D. Talshir 'A Reinvestigation of the Linguistic Relationship Between Chronicles and Ezra-Nehemiah' *VT* 165-193

M. Noth *The History of Israel* 319 fn 1

⁵⁵F. M. Cross 'A Reconstruction of the Judean Restoration' *JBL* 14

⁵⁶L. W. Batten *Ezra and Nehemiah* 2-3

⁵⁷C. C. Torrey *Ezra Studies* 247

⁵⁸J. Blenkinsopp *Ezra-Nehemiah* 48

⁵⁹W. Johnstone 'Which is the Best Commentary' *ET* 1991 9

Some would separate Ezra and Nehemiah from the Chronicler, and thus seek the identity of a compiler from elsewhere. Japhet⁶⁰ argues this, based on linguistic and stylistic differences between Chronicles and Ezra-Nehemiah. She concludes that there are no grounds for discussing the extent of a Chronicler's editorial work whatsoever. Williamson, and La Sor et al⁶¹ reach the same conclusion based on linguistic evidence, the relationship of the Greek versions, and the apparent ideology of the editor.

It is not known how much the editor used external sources, how much he altered his original sources, where the passage Nehemiah 8-10 fits, to what extent the editor had to link the books of Ezra and Nehemiah, or whether he linked them to the book of Chronicles. Indeed, his very identity is completely unknown. There are therefore many unresolved issues in this more recent area of debate, making it one difficult to use positively. It develops variables, rather than solutions. These variables will be introduced to the discussion in the main body of the thesis. Due to all the uncertainty over the identity of the editor, and the scope of his work, the thesis will refer to him simply as 'the editor' meaning the main redactor.

⁶⁰S. Japhet 'The Supposed Common Authorship of Chronicles and Ezra-Nehemiah Investigated Anew' VT 330-371

⁶¹H.G.M. Williamson *Israel In The Books Of Chronicles* 89
La Sor *Old Testament Survey* 638

SECTION E

The Methodology Of The Research

This thesis proposes a new approach. It will take an overview of the subject, looking individually at each of the more commonly debated topics, from the standpoint of recent discoveries, and literary approach. In each topic, a suggestion will be made regarding the probability of each of the three dates for Ezra's arrival. From these probabilities, each chapter will have a summary section, which will produce a tentative date for Ezra's and Nehemiah's arrival based on the synthesis of the probabilities and their interrelationships considered within that chapter. The final chapter will analyse all the probabilities developed within the chapters, and finally propose one most likely reconstruction of events, based on a synthesis of all the discussions. The thesis proposes that this synthesis can indicate the date of Ezra's and Nehemiah's arrival in Jerusalem with more confidence than any of the constituent issues alone.

The issues arising from a literary examination of the work Ezra-Nehemiah are in the forefront of modern debate. They therefore form the first main area of investigation within this thesis, as the subject of chapter 2.

CHAPTER TWO

THE IMPLICATIONS OF THE LITERARY STRUCTURE OF EZRA-NEHEMIAH TO THE DATES OF THE TWO REFORMERS

Within recent years, scholarly emphasis has been increasingly placed upon a literary, rather than historical analysis. Traditional exegesis has attempted to answer questions about the historical process by which a text was produced (diachronic analysis). A literary approach (following synchronic analysis) looks for another dimension, where the object of the research is to discover how the text produces meaning, rather than how the text may have been produced. Within the study of Ezra-Nehemiah, this has thrown focus upon the identity of the editor, his purposes, and the extent of his work. This chapter addresses these issues, and considers the importance of this approach for the temporal priority of Ezra or Nehemiah. The chapter divides into four sections, each addressing an interrelated issue concerning discussions arising from a literary analysis of the structure of Ezra-Nehemiah.

The first section examines the literary structure of the books of Ezra and Nehemiah, and any links between them and the book of Chronicles. These links are examined to discover what implications they have for the temporal priority of either Ezra or Nehemiah.

The second section considers the same questions in relation to the links between Ezra and Nehemiah alone. Any implications arising from these links for the temporal priority of Ezra or Nehemiah will be discussed.

The third section considers the work of Ezra-Nehemiah as a contiguous whole will be examined for implications of temporal priority arising from the underlying literary structure of Ezra-Nehemiah.

The fourth section considers the identity of the editor, with reference to the Chronicler, and the possible dates for the completion of Ezra-Nehemiah. This discussion will consider the possibility that the editor has confused the order of events in his source documents.

Finally, at the end of the chapter, a summary of the possibilities will draw together the indications in each section, correlating them, and indicating the most likely conclusion based on all the sections. The sections are discussed in isolation, allowing the full range of implications for Ezra's date of arrival to develop, before being correlated with the other

sections. However, the findings from one area of discussion often greatly influence (and occasionally initiate) another area of discussion. Therefore these thoughts are correlated across the sections, and presented in the concluding section of the chapter.

This approach will highlight the cumulative nature, and the inter-dependencies of the individual points enabling a reasoned conclusion to be reached.

SECTION A

Ezra, Nehemiah, And Chronicles As A Complete Work

It has often been proposed⁶² that Ezra-Nehemiah forms the final part of 'The Chronicler's History', a work presenting the history of Israel from Adam through to the work of Nehemiah. Such a proposal implies that the work has a deliberate historical flow, from Adam, to the return from exile and the rebuilding of the Temple and Jerusalem, and the re-establishment of Jewish Law. The link between Ezra-Nehemiah and Chronicles is suggested by the progression implicit via the identical verses in 2 Chronicles 36:22-23 and Ezra 1:1-2. This link in the literature may then imply that the Chronicler considered Ezra to have come before Nehemiah.

The opinion prevalent since 1832, is that there was at one time, a single book Chronicles-Ezra-Nehemiah. Zunz⁶³ was the first to postulate this theory. This position however is contested today. Japhet particularly has challenged it, and is gathering support (e.g. Williamson, Braun)⁶⁴. Japhet, in her study,⁶⁵ has stressed the differences between Ezra-Nehemiah and Chronicles. Zunz's thesis therefore needs examination considering this more recent challenge.

There are six areas delineated here that have been taken to support Zunz' hypothesis, which will be briefly considered. Each area in its discussion also considers alternative readings of the same information, which might suggest an alternative hypothesis.

1. The parallel between the beginning of Ezra and the conclusion of Chronicles.

The concluding verses of 2 Chronicles reoccur in the opening verses of Ezra 1. Childs⁶⁶ acknowledges that this suggests a link between the books, when he says

"The repetition of the last verses of Chronicles in the introduction of Ezra, regardless of the original order of the books within the Hagiographa, interprets the Ezra story as a continuation of Israel's history."

⁶²D. Talshir 'A Reinvestigation of the Linguistic relationship between Chronicles and Ezra-Nehemiah' VT165-193

⁶³L. Zunz 'DibrehaJJamin oder die Bücher der Chronik' 13-36

⁶⁴H. G. M. Williamson 'The Accession of Solomon in The Book Of Chronicles' VT 357

⁶⁵S. Japhet 'The Supposed Common Authorship of Chronicles and Ezra-Nehemiah Investigated anew' VT 330-371

⁶⁶B. S. Childs *Introduction To the Old Testament as Scripture* 632

By this device, Childs considers that the author of Ezra is deliberately signalling a continuation into the work of Chronicles. Blenkinsopp comments⁶⁷

"There is nothing quite like this in the Hebrew Bible, though we detect some less obvious attempts at linkage, e.g. at the end of Genesis and beginning of Exodus, and between Numbers (36:13) and Deuteronomy (1:1,5). It could have served simply to indicate where the reader must go for the next chapter of the history, but it is also possible that 1-2 Chronicles and Ezra-Nehemiah ... were conceived as one segmented work, and that a break was made at this point to emphasize the new era which opened with the accession of Cyrus."

The suggested continuity needs identification, for the books themselves have not remained in a strict order, which could also have advertised which was the subsequent book to any reader. The book Ezra-Nehemiah is consistently separate from that of Chronicles. For example, the Codex Vaticanus has Ezra-Nehemiah (Esdras B) separated from Chronicles by 1 Esdras. However, La Sor et al.⁶⁸ observes that the book of Chronicles does not always occur after Ezra-Nehemiah

"Although by far the most frequent order, this is not the only one extant among the Hebrew mss. Some Spanish mss, one Masoretic treatise (13th century CE), and most notably, the famous Aleppo Codex (10th century CE), places Chronicles at the beginning of the writings, with Ezra-Nehemiah at the end."

Therefore some other method of identifying the link between the two works is necessary, and is provided by the author's use of these common verses.

However, this alone does not necessarily show that the two have a common authorship, and form a united work. It may merely be a literary device used by the author of the later work to tie in with previous accounts, and thus gain a *sitz im leben* for the new work. Eskenazi⁶⁹ considers that

"the parallels between the two books resulted from a deliberate borrowing of the beginning of Ezra (Ezra 1.1 ff.) to form the conclusion of Chronicles. The purpose of appending Cyrus' decree to Chronicles would be to provide a hopeful conclusion to the book."

Selman,⁷⁰ based on Williamson⁷¹ also follows this line, considering that there is significant evidence that the Chronicler borrowed from Ezra 1, rather than that Ezra continues the story of Chronicles.

In conclusion, Zunz's thesis of common authorship is certainly one explanation of the common verses, but is not the only one. There is also a valid alternate explanation, which does not point to a common authorship.

⁶⁷J. Blenkinsopp *'Ezra-Nehemiah'* 48

⁶⁸La Sor *Old Testament Survey* 638

⁶⁹T.C. Eskenazi *In An Age Of Prose* 18

⁷⁰M.J. Selman *1 Chronicles* 67

⁷¹H.G.M. Williamson *Israel in the Books Of Chronicles* 7-11

2. The Analogy of Nehemiah 11:3-19 with 1 Chronicles 9:2-17,22

There is a possible stylistic link between Ezra-Nehemiah and Chronicles beyond that of the shared text considered above. 1 Chronicles 9 details Israel's settling into the inheritance of the land, and the beginning of the monarchy, and gives a list of individuals. Nehemiah 11 when making a similar point about the settlement into the land, follows the same format in producing a list. The correspondence here in style again could indicate a common author.

However, there is also another valid possible reason for the stylistic similarity. The use of the particular format noted above may also be a deliberate device imported by the author of Chronicles. Selman⁷² considers that the Chronicler 'borrowed' these verses from Ezra-Nehemiah, using them to conclude two out of the three major parts of his work. The outer framework of Chronicles begins with a summary of Genesis 1, and concludes with Ezra 1, the first and last books of the present Hebrew Bible. He thus demonstrates that he is giving a complete history of Israel. Beyond that, the first section of 1 Chronicles concludes with a quotation from Nehemiah 11:3-19. This style of borrowing structures from older texts to give to his own structures is an established pattern for the Chronicler, as Selman⁷³ suggests

"One example is the way in which sections in Genesis which begin with the words, 'these are the generations of ...' (Gn 10:1-29; 25:1-4, 12-16, *etc.*) have been selected to form the structure of the main sections of 1 Chronicles 1."

The Chronicler also directly quotes from other passages, borrowing significant phrases or themes (compare Ex 14:13-14 and 2 Chronicles 20:15,17). The Chronicler appears free in his use of texts from across the Canon to form his structures. Therefore a similar use of texts from Ezra-Nehemiah, cannot have great significance. Therefore there is no strong implication here from the quotations used, that the Chronicler also wrote Ezra-Nehemiah, but merely that he used the work in creating his structures, as he also used other works. The only conclusion possible from the textual similarities, is that the later editor was clearly aware of the earlier work. This does not however indicate *which* was the earlier work.

3. Linguistic similarities between Ezra-Nehemiah and Chronicles

Zunz was the first to identify similarities in syntax, vocabulary, and style between the books of Chronicles Ezra and Nehemiah, which he considered evidence of common

⁷²M.J.Selman *1 Chronicles* 38

⁷³M.J.Selman *1 Chronicles* 39

authorship. Driver⁷⁴ also formed a list of 46 verbal similarities between the documents. Curtis⁷⁵ similarly identifies 136 items of similarity between the works. From this similarity, Curtis and Driver both suggest a common author of Chronicles, and Ezra-Nehemiah. More recently, this theory of common authorship has been advocated by Blenkinsopp.⁷⁶ Polzin⁷⁷ also speaks of an 'amazing linguistic similarity' (though he considers Nehemiah's memoirs - Nehemiah 1:1-7:5, 12:27-13:31 - to show different linguistic patterns to the rest of Chronicles-Ezra-Nehemiah).

Freedman⁷⁸ denied any similarity in style between Chronicles and Ezra-Nehemiah. Japhet⁷⁹ agrees with this, and suggests that the evidence actually suggests that Ezra and Nehemiah were written by different authors. Williamson⁸⁰ has supported this position, adding to a debate that is too complex and detailed to consider here. Japhet's⁸¹ summary is useful, suggesting that the books of Chronicles and Ezra-Nehemiah

"illustrate an array of small and large differences - in language, style, literary method, etc. - and express different and often opposite views about central issues of biblical history and theology".

There are several issues that require brief attention here.

i/ The Size Of The Sample

Blenkinsopp⁸² adds a note of caution on defining any linguistic similarities, when he observes that

"the extensive use of sources in Ezra-Nehemiah, constituting about 70 percent of the total narrative ... greatly reduces the data base on which such conclusions can be drawn".

The similarities between the style of Ezra-Nehemiah and Chronicles, are therefore difficult to define properly, due to the size of the sample in Ezra-Nehemiah. Eskenazi⁸³ considers that the impressive list of 136 items of similarity between the works (as listed by Curtis) is

⁷⁴S.R.Driver *Introduction To The Literature Of The Old Testament* 535-539

⁷⁵E.L.Curtis and A.A. Madsen *A Critical And Exegetical Commentary On The Books Of Chronicles* 28-36

⁷⁶J. Blenkinsopp 'Ezra-Nehemiah' 47-54

⁷⁷R.Polzin *Late Biblical Hebrew* 75

⁷⁸D.N. Freedman 'The Chronicler's Purpose' *CBQ* 437

⁷⁹S.Japhet 'The Supposed Common Authorship Of Chronicles and Ezra-Nehemiah Investigated Anew' *VT* 330-371

⁸⁰H.G.M.Williamson *Israel In The Books Of Chronicles* 37-59

⁸¹S.Japhet *I & II Chronicles* 4

⁸²J. Blenkinsopp 'Ezra-Nehemiah' 49

⁸³T.C.Eskenazi *In An Age Of Prose* 19

actually even smaller. This makes the size of the sample used for the comparison of styles statistically insignificant. She says that

"Even according to Curtis's own tabulations, only sixteen of these peculiarities are unique to Ezra-Nehemiah and Chronicles. Thirty-three are unique to Chronicles. All the rest occur elsewhere in the Bible, most frequently in the postexilic period ... most of the unique terms found only in Ezra-Nehemiah and Chronicles pertain to the kinds of ceremonies which only they describe in detail".

This list of similarities is therefore not as significant as first considered.

Furthermore, the whole work of Ezra-Nehemiah comprises only 23 chapters, in comparison with 65 chapters in 1 and 2 Chronicles. Removing the probable source documents of Ezra-Nehemiah, as defined by Blenkinsopp, there are less than 7 chapters of material that can fully reflect the author's style. This is obviously a limited sample from which to derive generalised statements about style, and any such statements need to be carefully considered. Therefore Zunz's argument here is statistically weak, and conclusions drawn from it relatively insignificant.

ii/ Is The Style that of Author, Or of the Period?

The works of Chronicles, and Ezra-Nehemiah were written in the post-exilic period. The common period of authorship may produce a similarity of word choice, and style of the books, regardless of the actual author. It is quite reasonable to suppose that a work written by a contemporary of Shakespeare will have many stylistic similarities with Shakespeare, when compared for example to a modern author like Steinbeck. Indeed, literature of the period under consideration is commonly referred to as belonging to 'Late Biblical Hebrew'.⁸⁴ This in itself presupposes the existence of a recognisable style which Ezra-Nehemiah and Chronicles have in common, which has nothing to do with authorship.

iii/ Similarities With Ezra, But Not Nehemiah

Talshir⁸⁵ also examines the books for vocabulary, syntax, idioms, and other expressions. He concludes that there is a correspondence of terms between Chronicles and what he terms Ezra (chapters 1-6) and the Ezra memoir (EM), but not with Nehemiah. Talshir⁸⁶ speaking of the Ezra memoir (7:27-9:15) concluded

"it is not improbable that the employment of the first person here is merely a literary device and that the author of Ezra and EM are one and the same."

⁸⁴R. Polzin *Late Biblical Hebrew* 70-75

⁸⁵D. Talshir 'A reinvestigation of the Linguistic relationship between Chronicles and Ezra-Nehemiah' VT 165-193

⁸⁶D. Talshir 'A reinvestigation of the Linguistic relationship between Chronicles and Ezra-Nehemiah' VT 190

However, Talshir⁸⁷ did notice some differences with Nehemiah, when analysing the Nehemiah memoir(NM).

"The authors of NM and Chronicles probably lived in approximately the same period ... they differ considerably in grammatical usage".

Therefore Talshir considers that the Chronicler wrote the works of Chronicles, and Ezra, but not the book of Nehemiah. Talshir concludes⁸⁸ that the similarity he discovers

"certainly attests proximity of time and place, and perhaps even the same circle."

If his conclusions are followed, then the work of Ezra belongs to Chronicles, but Nehemiah may be a later addition, with the style merely reflecting the *sitz im leben* of the day. Polzin⁸⁹ concurs here, considering N¹ to have come from another pen, but N² (Nehemiah 7:6-12:36) to belong to Chronicles-Ezra linguistically.

In concluding this consideration of linguistic similarities, the words of Eskenazi⁹⁰ are apposite,

"when it comes to the question of the relation between Ezra-Nehemiah and Chronicles, linguistic studies are at something of a standstill."

Blenkinsopp⁹¹ adds the caveat that the occurrence of similarities

"does not prove common authorship, but it at least greatly complicates the task of proving separate authorship".

At present the debate is finely poised, though the evidence is mounting to suggest the diverse authorship of the works Chronicles, and Ezra-Nehemiah.

4. Theological and ideological similarities

Zunz identified 6 major themes that run through Chronicles and Ezra-Nehemiah. These are as follows

- an emphasis on David and his dynasty
- an emphasis on the cultus
- genealogies
- retribution
- the concept of Israel
- anti Samaritan polemic

⁸⁷D. Talshir 'A reinvestigation of the Linguistic relationship between Chronicles and Ezra-Nehemiah' VT 190

⁸⁸D. Talshir 'A reinvestigation of the Linguistic relationship between Chronicles and Ezra-Nehemiah' VT 192

⁸⁹R. Polzin *Late Biblical Hebrew* 75

⁹⁰T.C. Eskenazi *In An Age Of Prose* 20

⁹¹J. Blenkinsopp *Ezra-Nehemiah* 51

Blenkinsopp⁹² has studied these themes, focusing particularly on the Davidic theme in Chronicles, which he considers very important (mentioned in 19 out of 65 chapters). He considers that the theme of David has a distinctive emphasis for the Chronicler, in that David is the provider of Cultic worship in Jerusalem. Blenkinsopp sees this theme repeated in both Ezra-Nehemiah where David is seen as

"the founder of Jerusalem as the national cult centre, the provider for the temple, and the organiser of the cult with special reference to liturgical music. But it is precisely *in this role* that he is referred to in Ezra-Nehemiah wherever the occasion offers (Ezra 3:10;8.20; Nehemiah 11.23;12.46,36,45-46)"

Looking at other themes within Ezra-Nehemiah and Chronicles, Blenkinsopp identifies the following:

- i. The preparations for building the first, and second Temples are described in parallel ways. (Ezra 3.7 1 Chronicles 22.4,15, 2 Chronicles 2.9,15-16)
- ii. In both instances the Altar is set up before the Temple is built Ezra 3.2 1 Chronicles 21.18-22.1
- iii. Both Temples are endorsed by the heads of ancestral houses Ezra 2.68 1 Chronicles 26.26
- iv. Both discuss the sacred Temple vessels Ezra 1.7 7.19 1 Chronicles 29.21 2 Chronicles 29.21 and they discuss them in terms that are practically identical.
- v. Both the order of sacrifices Ezra 3.4-6 2 Chronicles 2.3 8.13, and the enumeration of sacrificial materials Ezra 7.17-18 8.35-36 1 Chronicles 29.21 2 Chronicles 29.21,32 are practically identical
- vi. The description of liturgical music and musical instruments and those that play them correspond closely. Ezra 3.10 Nehemiah 12.35 1 Chronicles 15.19 16.5-6 2 Chronicles 5.12-13
- vii. The Antiphon of liturgical prayer 'for he is good and his loving kindness endures forever' appears often in Chronicles, and also in Ezra 3.11 Ezra 7.27-28
- viii. The confessional psalm of Nehemiah 9.5-6 parallels that found in 1 Chronicles 29.10-19 2 Chronicles 2.11 6.4-11 9.9 20.5-12

However, these similarities of theme are contested. Eskenazi⁹³ suggests that

"Each of these characteristics has been challenged or reinterpreted in recent years by opponents of common authorship".

Eskenazi⁹⁴ later adds

"most of the alleged hallmarks of the Chronicler do not occur in both Ezra-Nehemiah and Chronicles. Only one of these, namely the cult constitutes a possible common emphasis, although even here differences emerge. All other characteristics constitute, in fact, ideological contrasts between the books."

Blenkinsopp's list of similarities therefore needs further investigation.

⁹²J. Blenkinsopp *Ezra-Nehemiah* 51

⁹³T.C. Eskenazi *In An Age Of Prose* 22

⁹⁴T.C. Eskenazi *In An Age Of Prose* 33

His first four points relate to details of the setting up of the Temple, both Solomon's and Zerubbabel's. Similarities are reasonable here considering the care undertaken by the post-exilic community to emulate the details of the Solomonic Temple, and to use the best craftsmen and materials in those efforts. In each case, there are good theological as well as literary reasons for the similarity. The second four points within Blenkinsopp's list relate to the liturgical usage of the Temple. Again it is not surprising to see similarities here, for both Chronicles and Ezra-Nehemiah (if seen as separate works) date to the same period of worship. Therefore they should record the same patterns of liturgical worship, whether it be attributed to the Temple of Solomon, or Zerubbabel.

Therefore these points raised by Blenkinsopp cannot suggest any more than a common purpose within the two works; and since both works discuss the building of a Temple, they are hardly noteworthy.

However, there are also notable differences between the works Ezra-Nehemiah and Chronicles once the common subject matter is abandoned. Freedman⁹⁵ suggests the following differences

- i. The differing views of the monarchy and prophecy. For the Chronicler, 'Monarchy' and 'Prophecy' go hand in hand; but for Ezra and Nehemiah, prophets have 'disappeared with the line of David'.
- ii. The chief concerns are quite different. The Davidic line is essential for Chronicles, but Ezra in his prayer mentions older 'mighty deeds'.

Freedman⁹⁶ concludes that the style and interests of Chronicles are fundamentally different to those of Ezra-Nehemiah. He says that

"Above all, the Chronicler was a monarchist, while the other was a clericalist, i.e., a scribe."

It appears then, that the evidence from Zunz's list of major themes is equivocal. Scholars seeking to establish a link between Ezra-Nehemiah and Chronicles refer to the prominence of the Temple and cultus in both Chronicles and Ezra. However, those wishing to prove otherwise refer to the prominence of other themes such as the differing view of the monarchy. No specific conclusions can be drawn from such a debate.

5. The Structure

The present structure of the books implies the link Chronicles-Ezra-Nehemiah. This is because the important dates occur regularly throughout all three books, apparently

⁹⁵D.N.Freedman 'The Chronicler's Purpose' CBQ 440

⁹⁶D.N.Freedman 'The Chronicler's Purpose' CBQ 442

forming a continuous historical presentation. The books present a complete unified history, requiring the order Chronicles-Ezra-Nehemiah. Johnstone⁹⁷ says

"the Chronicler's work, read Chronicles-Ezra-Nehemiah, leads from Adam, through the catastrophic history of Israel, to the new captivity of God's people, to their new release and return to the land and the triumph of the reconstructed sanctuary and city."

Blenkinsopp⁹⁸ adds that the pattern of the presentation of leaders is continuous across the books.

"The last part of Chronicles is ordered according to movements of renewal and reform following on periods of religious infidelity; Hezekiah after Ahaz, Josiah after Manasseh, both followed by a celebration of passover. (2 Chron. 30; 35:1-19). This pattern continues into Ezra 1-6, where the renewal of the cult concludes with the celebration of the same festival (6:19-22). As at the time of Hezekiah, the priests and Levites prepared themselves by ritual purification (Ezra 6:20 2 Chronicles 30:3,15) ... It would be difficult to find a clearer indication of unity of conception which binds together the two works into one history with its own distinctive point of view and purpose."

However, while the structure suggests the unity of the work, this could be a deliberate literary device used by the chronicler, as might also be the inclusion of the common verses. The structure, regarding those common verses, points to a deliberate connection between the works Chronicles and Ezra-Nehemiah. However, no comment is possible on whether that deliberate connection is due to a single author, or to the author of Chronicles using the earlier memoirs as a foundation.

Finally, this common structure may also reflect a distinctive literary fashion rather than authorship, in which case that facet of Zunz's hypothesis has no force.⁹⁹ For example, Mowinckel suggests there that there is a specific Hebrew pattern for example for presenting the dates in relation to a Kings reign. If such a pattern is followed here, then the same could also be true about some of the other structural items considered common between the works.

6. 1 Esdras

This book is a historical narrative passing without break or comment from 2 Chronicles 35, into Ezra 7 and Nehemiah 8. This suggests that 1 Esdras is part of an older translation of a work including Chronicles, Ezra and Nehemiah. This work of 1 Esdras will be

⁹⁷W. Johnstone 'Which is the Best Commentary' *ET* 9

⁹⁸J. Blenkinsopp 'Ezra-Nehemiah' 54

⁹⁹ In a later discussion of the text of Ezra 7:7-8 the fashions regarding presentation of dating material will be discussed.

considered in more detail in chapter 4 section A. However many¹⁰⁰ in the words of Selman consider¹⁰¹

"1 Esdras is a derivative compilation and is paraphrastic in character."

CONCLUSIONS

The link between Chronicles-Ezra-Nehemiah has been much in debate in recent years¹⁰² but Johnstone¹⁰³ concludes that

"Those opposed to common authorship (especially Japhet - and among the commentators - Williamson) are making significant headway."

Therefore the literary progression Chronicles-Ezra-Nehemiah which (assuming the Chronicler was not confused) indicated a historical progression from Adam through to Ezra and then Nehemiah, is no longer even possible. Grabbe¹⁰⁴ suggests that the link Chronicles-Ezra-Nehemiah

"can no longer be accepted as a basis to work without further justification".

It now appears at least equally possible that the Chronicler deliberately styled his work to precede the already existing work Ezra-Nehemiah. Indeed the style reflected in both may simply be due to a common historical background, rather than authorship. The similarities noted between the works are balanced by differences that are also noted. Therefore no conclusions of the temporal priority of either Ezra or Nehemiah can be drawn from this section.

The discussion must now move on to the similarities, or differences in themes presented by Ezra and Nehemiah together.

¹⁰⁰H.G.M. Williamson *Ezra and Nehemiah* 39

L.H. Brockington *Ezra Nehemiah and Esther* 11

¹⁰¹M.J. Selman *1 Chronicles* 67

¹⁰²e.g. the set piece debate for *Society of Biblical Literature* 1986, or the XIIIth Congress Of The International Organization for the Study of the Old Testament 1989.

¹⁰³W. Johnstone 'Which is the Best Commentary' *ET* 9

¹⁰⁴L.L. Grabbe *Judaism from Cyrus to Hadrian* 31

SECTION B

The Unity Or Diversity Of Ezra-Nehemiah

Following the conclusion of the last section, that the link between Ezra-Nehemiah and Chronicles cannot be assumed, the link between the works Ezra and Nehemiah also requires consideration.

1. The Significance Of A Single Work

The books of Ezra and Nehemiah have often been considered a single work (e.g. some Rabbis and Church fathers, as well as the later Masoretes). This possibility raises several issues of significance to the debate.

i. The References To Artaxerxes

The apparent unity of the work means that the similarly phrased references in Ezra and Nehemiah to Artaxerxes, have to refer to the same king. In chapter 3 section A Nehemiah's date will be considered. That section suggests that Nehemiah's date of arrival is to be set at 445 BCE. This means that the king in the united work has to be Artaxerxes I, which rules out the possibility of Ezra's arrival in 398 BCE as Artaxerxes I reigned only until 425 BCE

ii. Ezra's Mention Before Nehemiah

The order of compilation of the books implies that Ezra arrived in Jerusalem before Nehemiah. Childs¹⁰⁵ concludes this when he says that

"The books of Ezra and Nehemiah formed a single book in the Hebrew canon and preceded Chronicles in the order established for the Writings. The separation into two books was a relatively late development."

These indicators suggest that Ezra came to Jerusalem in the seventh year of Artaxerxes I, before Nehemiah. However, this assertion makes two assumptions

- a. The final editor had a chronological rather than another purpose in mind (That purpose will be examined in chapter 2 section D).
- b. The book of Ezra-Nehemiah does form a united work.

2. An Examination Of The Evidence For A Single Work

The apparent unity of the books needs detailed examination, to determine whether this apparent unity is genuine, and whether it does imply Ezra's arrival before Nehemiah. This

¹⁰⁵B.S.Childs *Introduction to the Old Testament* 626

is examined under the following three headings, Rabbinical Studies, Hebrew Text, and Extra Biblical Sources.

i. Rabbinical Studies

The Rabbinical writings¹⁰⁶ indicate that originally Ezra-Nehemiah were one work.

"Ezra wrote the book that bears his name, and the genealogies of the book of Chronicles up to his own time. Who finished it? Nehemiah the son of Halchaiah."

The baraita which Harrison¹⁰⁷ considers to be an unauthorised gloss in the Talmudic Baba Bathra, only mentions the book of Ezra. Harrison suggests that there are reasons for believing that the gloss is of 2ndC. BCE origin (though the Babylonian Talmud itself was a product of the 5thC. CE) Harrison¹⁰⁸ quotes the baraita as follows

"The order of ... the Kethubhim is Ruth, Psalms, Job, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Solomon, Lamentations, Daniel, the roll of Esther, Ezra, Chronicles."

Besides this, in the great Jewish commentaries, (Rashi, Ibn Ezra) the exposition passes from Ezra into Nehemiah as though only a new paragraph started, not a new book. The Talmud also includes the activities of Nehemiah in Ezra (Baba Sanh 93 b)

The Masoretes also regarded the books as one, counting Nehemiah Ch 3:22 as the middle verse, which is only correct if the two books are a unity. The Masoretic notes commenting on the text (added after each book) also imply this, as the comments for both books come after Nehemiah. Batten¹⁰⁹ remarks

"At the end of each book of the OT. there are certain Massoretic notes, giving the number of verses, the middle point of the volume or roll, etc. There are no such notes at the end of Ezr., and those at the end of Ne. cover both books, showing that the two constituted a single work when those notes were made."

The Rabbinic authorities appear therefore to suggest the initial unity of the two books, and therefore due to the apparent structure, the temporal priority of Ezra.

ii. Hebrew Text

The texts and manuscripts, (Leningrad Codex 1008 CE, Aleppo Codex 930 CE) show Ezra and Nehemiah appearing as one book. In fact it is not until the 15th century CE that Ezra and Nehemiah are separated in the Jewish Bibles. This points to a tradition of the unity of the work Ezra-Nehemiah that dates from antiquity.

iii. Extra Biblical Sources

¹⁰⁶TB *Baba Bathra* 15 a

¹⁰⁷R.K.Harrison *Introduction to the Old Testament* 271

¹⁰⁸R.K.Harrison *Introduction to the Old Testament* 271

¹⁰⁹L.H. Batten *Ezra and Nehemiah* 1

The early church Fathers saw Ezra-Nehemiah as one book. In the fifth century CE Jerome gave the name of Esdras to both books, describing Nehemiah as the second book of Esdras. Melito of Sardis¹¹⁰ also accepts this proposition. He wrote in 180 CE enumerating 22 books of the Old Testament, according to a list that he says he obtained from Jewish sources in Syria. He mentions Ezra alone, which implies that Nehemiah, rather than being ignored, was part of Ezra.

Jerome in Prologus Galeatus also subscribes to this view. Josephus¹¹¹ and Eusebius¹¹² also allude to the concept of a single work. It was not until the time of Origen in 250 CE that the two books began to be considered separately, though as mentioned above, many still considered them united.

3. The Division Of The Two Books

It seems apparent from the above, that the books of Ezra and Nehemiah have from antiquity been regarded as a single work. If this was indeed the case, then an explanation for their present separateness is necessary.

Harrison¹¹³ points out that Origen (250 CE) was first responsible for

"designating Nehemiah as *liber secundus Esdrae*, and thereby established the precedent that grew into normal Christian practice."

Jerome in his Latin Vulgate followed Origen, though in his writing of the Prologus Galeatus he personally was of the opposite opinion. The Vulgate then became a common basis for subsequent translations, setting a tradition that the two books were separate.

Jerome's treatment of the material implies that there was a well-respected body of opinion agreeing with Origen's division of the books. This respected body of opinion appears to have been around for a long time, and may go back at least to Josephus' presentation of Ezra's history. Josephus, while presenting the book Ezra-Nehemiah as a unity, treats the two reformers separately¹¹⁴ He narrates the details of Ezra's work in entirety, concluding with his death, before relating the work of Nehemiah. 1 Esdras also narrates the work of Ezra in it's entirety omitting any reference to Nehemiah. Indeed, 1 Esdras never records Nehemiah's work at all. Josephus may have drawn on this source when making his history. This separate treatment of the two reformers may point to an early source document in which Ezra and Nehemiah are entirely separate. The existence of such a document would be justification for Jerome presenting Origen's opinion for the Vulgate,

¹¹⁰according to Eusebius *Historia Ecclesia* 4.26.14

¹¹¹Josephus 'Contra Apionem' Works 1.8

¹¹²Eusebius *Eusebius' Ecclesiastical History* IV:26

¹¹³R.K.Harrison *Introduction to the Old Testament* 1135

¹¹⁴Josephus 'Antiquities of the Jews' WorksXI,V,4-6

and the subsequent changes in Christian Bibles, later to be reflected in the Jewish Scriptures. If this is the case, then the tradition for the unity of the work Ezra-Nehemiah could be the later (and less historically representative) tradition.

Kraemer¹¹⁵ suggests that

“the fact that the ancient believing community received these works as a single book is far from probative when considering their original status as literature. The community may have read them together at a point subsequent to their formulation.”

A fuller treatment of the role of 1 Esdras and Josephus is made in chapter 4 sections A and B. For the present the thesis will proceed on the basis of the common tradition (e.g. Rashi, Ibn Ezra, Jerome) which points to the suggestion that Ezra-Nehemiah was initially one work, separated in the Christian era.

4. Evidence against the unity of Ezra-Nehemiah

Reconsidering the structure of Ezra and Nehemiah, Kraemer¹¹⁶, with apologies to Eskenazi considers that they are two distinct works that are

“competing, perhaps even contradictory (but *not* complementary) accounts of the same history.”

Kraemer¹¹⁷ suggests that there are ideological differences between the two books.

“The book of Ezra is a priestly book; its concerns are the Temple, the priesthood and the levites, and purity – that is, the cult. The book of Nehemiah, in contrast, is a lay book, sometimes exhibiting antagonism to priestly concerns and supporting, instead, what might be called scribal values”.

However, it needs to be noted that Kraemer attempts to distinguish the role of scribe in Nehemiah from that seen in the book of Ezra.

Kraemer reconsiders the role of Ezra in the book of Ezra. He sees him as a priest of good pedigree, whose sole concern is the rebuilding of the cult. In Nehemiah, in what are third person narratives, Kraemer considers Ezra to display different characteristics. In Nehemiah Ezra is a scribe, a man concerned with the Torah alone, and relatively unconcerned with the Temple. From this, Kraemer concludes that the two pictures of Ezra result from two strands within the cultic politics of the second temple period, the priestly,

¹¹⁵D.Kraemer 'On the Relationship of the books of Ezra and Nehemiah' *JSOT* 74

¹¹⁶D.Kraemer 'On the Relationship of the books of Ezra and Nehemiah' *JSOT* 92

¹¹⁷D.Kraemer 'On the Relationship of the books of Ezra and Nehemiah' *JSOT* 77

and the scribal, or the cultus and the Torah. The two accounts for him are therefore incompatible, and clearly show that the books of Ezra and Nehemiah were written independently.

However, there may be an alternative explanation for this difference which Kraemer had not included in his analysis.

Ezra relates to the situation in the book of Ezra in a particular way. From the apparent context, the Temple is standing (though not the city walls) and the people have an inadequate understanding of worship. As a priest, this comes as a shock to Ezra, and he sets about addressing the issue. This is the substance of his immediate actions, which form the memoirs of Ezra 9-10 record. He is described as a priest in this context (Ezra 10:10,16) though that might be for identification purposes with the priestly class which is about to receive a major shake up with the reforms that are instigated. However, that is not the only designation given to Ezra in the memoirs. Ezra the scribe is also in view in chapter 9 especially. There are many references there to past dealings of God with Israel, and in particular, to the 'words of the God of Israel' (Ezra 9:4) a reference to the Torah. This is something Kraemer considers to be scribal, rather than priestly.

Within the book of Nehemiah, the role of Ezra is purely about an important religious ceremony, which has particular significance as it also celebrates the completion of Nehemiah's wall. It is true to note that here Ezra is referred to as the scribe (Nehemiah 8:4,13), and is involved in what is clearly 'scribal activity' to use Kraemer's distinction. However, he is also referred to as a priest (Nehemiah 8:2), and as a priest and scribe (Nehemiah 8:9). The author of Nehemiah 8 obviously accepts the validity of both offices for his Ezra character.

Within Nehemiah, the context suggests Ezra's role to be more that of a scribe than a priest. The context of Nehemiah 8 requires that role for him. The memoirs of Ezra (Ezra 9-10) shows the crowd, out of respect for Ezra the priest, bringing reform to their behaviour. Again this is from the requirements of the context, and need not suggest editorial bias.

So though Kraemer's reconstruction has been carefully argued, an equally valid one makes the two books equally sympathetic to the single character of Ezra the priest and scribe, a man for all seasons. Indeed, this reconstruction, based on the even-ness of the titles ascribed to him appears the more likely.

Conclusions

The evidence that the two books of Ezra and Nehemiah (following Eskenazi rather than Kraemer) formed a single book appears quite strong. Therefore, the unity and order imply that the author intended his readers to understand that Ezra came to Jerusalem before Nehemiah.

The only remaining significant doubt in this issue, is whether there were two ancient traditions relating to the unity or diversity of the books respectively, each with its roots in antiquity. The tradition of unity is reflected in Jewish, and Christian traditions. The tradition of the diversity of the two books is indicated by 1 Esdras and Josephus, followed by Origen and the Latin Vulgate. The existence of this second tradition is in some doubt however; for even Josephus (an apparent advocate of the diversity of the two books in his history) presents the work Ezra-Nehemiah as united. Therefore the conclusion that in the earliest sources, the books were united appears most likely.

Therefore it appears that the construction of the books favours the position that Ezra came before Nehemiah. On this basis a date of 458 BCE for Ezra seems most probable as the only date under consideration that falls before Nehemiah. The dates of 438 or 398 BCE are therefore less likely.

SECTION C

The Literary Structure Of Ezra-Nehemiah

The previous two sections have considered the implications for dating the arrival of Ezra and Nehemiah in Jerusalem based on the structural chronology that the book Ezra-Nehemiah gives. There does appear to be a definite order inherent within the structure of at least Ezra-Nehemiah. The previous section concluded on the basis of this structure, that a date for Ezra's arrival of 458 BCE was most likely. That inference assumes that the structure was arranged historically. This is not necessarily the case. The editor may have been presenting a theological, rather than historical message in his work, and therefore reordered his material on theological, rather than historical lines. If the order is theological, then the significance of the narrative order in Ezra-Nehemiah will be theological rather than historical. The study will therefore move on to consider the theological structure of the work Ezra-Nehemiah, and its implications for the temporal priority of Ezra or Nehemiah.

1. Evidence Of A Theological Order

The recent approach of literary criticism to the books of the Chronicler has shifted the area of debate from the background historicity on to the canonical shape of the book itself, studying it from a literary rather than a historical perspective. Johnstone¹¹⁸ comments that

"In recent years emphasis in interpretation has shifted to the canonical 'shape' of the scriptures, to the final and canonical form, to the literary qualities of the text 'as it is'."

In the case of the present debate, the apparent literary and theological unity of the work of Ezra-Nehemiah gives a specific context for the arrival of each reformer. This context is significant, as Tremper Longman III¹¹⁹ suggests

"If literature is an act of communication, then meaning resides in the intention of the author. The author has encoded a message for the readers. Interpretation then has as its goal the recovery of the author's purpose in writing."

He suggests then that the editor has a theological message he is trying to impart. We need to interpret the entire book in this light. It is therefore important to determine the editor's intention in creating the literary structure. Therefore the editorial purpose of both the location and style of the dating references, and the positioning of Ezra relative to Nehemiah in the account need consideration.

¹¹⁸W. Johnstone 'Which is the best Commentary' *ET* 8

¹¹⁹Tremper Longman III *Literary Approaches to Biblical Interpretation* 64-65

i. The Theological Theme Of Ezra-Nehemiah

The theological perspective of Ezra-Nehemiah needs consideration as revealing the true import and purpose of the editor's writing. It will show the significance of Ezra in relation to Nehemiah, and describe any clear (to a contemporary Jewish audience) theological reason that the editor might have for portraying Ezra arriving before Nehemiah.

Sternberg¹²⁰ identifies many influences that need identifying in the interpretation of a historical text. For this thesis the following three will be considered. Historiography, Ideology, and Aesthetics.

- a. The historiographical issues are under discussion in the wider thesis.
- b. The aesthetic influences are considered in point two, subsection two, entitled 'The Dating Structure'.
- c. The Ideological influence requires attention here. The themes and theologies presented form the focus of this influence.

Eskenazi¹²¹ suggests the following thematic structure for the whole book.

"First, Ezra-Nehemiah shifts the focus from leaders to participating community. Second, Ezra-Nehemiah expands the concept of the house of God from the Temple to the City. Third, Ezra-Nehemiah emphasises the primacy of the written text over the oral as a source of authority".

Bremond¹²² produces a similar structural scheme with three stages to the work Ezra-Nehemiah.

- i. Potentiality Ezra 1.1-4
- ii. Process of actualisation Ezra 1.5-Nehemiah 7.22
- iii. Success Nehemiah 8.1-13.31

From these, and other attempted analyses of the work, three major divisions within the work can be identified. The first occurs with the beginning of the restoration of Israel (Ezra 1-6). The second is based around Ezra's memoirs (Ezra 7-10), and the third around Nehemiah's memoirs (Nehemiah 1-13). These divisions are supplemented by a fourth (Nehemiah 7-13) within the book of Nehemiah. The precise point of division is uncertain, Eskenazi suggesting 7:6,¹²³ while Bremond suggested 8:1.¹²⁴ Wherever the line is exactly drawn, the change in theme is clear. The record then changes focus, from the work of wall

¹²⁰M. Sternberg *The Poetics Of Biblical Narrative* 1-57

¹²¹T.C. Eskenazi *In An Age Of Prose* 2

¹²²C. Bremond *La Logique De Possibles Narratifs Communications* 75

¹²³T.C. Eskenazi *In An Age Of Prose* 13

¹²⁴C. Bremond *La Logique De Possibles Narratifs Communications* 75

building, to that of law keeping. The list in Nehemiah 7 is the uncertain passage. For this thesis, the list will be taken to be part of the fourth division, along with Eskenazi. This is because at present the structure shows each section beginning with preamble, and a list of names (Ezra 2, Ezra 8, Nehemiah 3, and Nehemiah 7). The work Ezra-Nehemiah then divides into four, showing building (Ezra 1-6, and Nehemiah 1-6), followed by spiritual consolidation (Ezra 7-10 and Nehemiah 7-13). A final division could be added here within Nehemiah 7-13, dividing the passage at Nehemiah 10:39. This is also followed by a list of names (Nehemiah 11-12).

ii. The Lists Of Names As Part Of The Structure

The list of names reduplicated in Ezra 2 and Nehemiah 7 has long been seen as evidence of editorial work within Ezra-Nehemiah. The second of Bremond's divisions (Ezra 1:5 to Nehemiah 7:22) noted above is framed by the two lists of returning exiles, bringing a continuity and unity to the events between the two lists. The material between these lists also comes in three sections, each with its framework that neatly matches Bremond's motif of potentiality, actualisation, and success.

Eskenazi¹²⁵ also considers that the two lists of names form a framework within the book, and that this repetition of the lists forms a neat literary structure which

"welds diverse groups into a unity, into **אֶלֶל**, a 'people'. This document also effects a unity of past events with the present via the written mode. Previous generations became partners in present events through this document."

Therefore, according to Bremond's literary structure, these lists place Ezra as necessarily coming before Nehemiah for a theological purpose. This is because (as Bremond's framework presents the list) the Ezra material occurs between two passages whose theological purpose is fixed (the return under Zerubbabel - the beginning of the rebuilding, and the return under Nehemiah - the completion of the rebuilding). The section relating to Ezra therefore has been given a specific theological context.

iii. The Theological Framework

The editor's theological agenda suggests the following priorities:

- i. the completion of the Temple (Ezra 1-6)
- ii. the application of the Law (Ezra 7-10)
- iii. the rebuilding of the walls of Jerusalem. (Nehemiah 1-7)
- iv. the reintroduction of the Law in consummation of the blessings (Nehemiah 8-10)
- v. the reintroduction of the Law to a community beginning to stray (Nehemiah 11-13)

Theologically speaking, the first priority has to be the Temple's reconstruction, for without that there is no sacrificial system, and no possibility of Yahweh's return to dwell with them.

¹²⁵T.C. Eskenazi *In An Age Of Prose* 88

The application of the Law (Ezra 9-10) to the sins of the people is the second most important factor, purifying the people, before the final seal of blessing by the completion of the wall. This demonstrates the need of the chosen people to purify themselves before fully entering into the blessings promised by YHWH (a theme that reoccurs throughout the Hebrew scriptures). The rebuilding of the walls is then recorded, as a sign of blessing upon the people. More law giving is then recorded, as the people bind themselves in covenant (Nehemiah 10) to keep Gods Law as a response to the celebration. Finally, as a warning to the nation, the need to remain close to God is emphasised with further reform and law-giving. The final three chapters form a downbeat conclusion after the high point of Nehemiah 8-10.

This order makes good theological sense, and is a good explanation why the editor presents the information in this order. Eskenazi¹²⁶ considers that the united work of the two reformers in Nehemiah 8-10 represents the theological climax of the work. For this purpose, the deliberate portrayal is that Ezra preceded Nehemiah, because the combined work of both Ezra and Nehemiah forms the culmination of the entire period of return and renewal. They therefore form the climax of his book.

2. Evidence For An Historical Order

i. The Theological Structure Does Have An Historical Basis

Embedded within this structure (apparently by the editor, from the evidence of the last subsection) are the roles of Ezra the Lawgiver, and Nehemiah the Governor. The structure requires the presence of Ezra in the latter parts of Nehemiah and hence implies their contemporaneity; though the references in Nehemiah 8 may have been placed there for structural, rather than historical reasons.

However, if the editor was working on theological and non-historical grounds when including Ezra in Nehemiah 8-10, where he actually had no part, then it is surprising that he does not complete the pattern. He could then report Nehemiah as being involved in both building passages, followed by Ezra in all three law-giving passages. The only reason that he does not include Nehemiah in the early building work has to be that the historical framework of his history prevented it. This suggests that the editor had at least some consideration for historical detail. We know that Nehemiah could not have been involved in such a project, and the editor makes no suggestion that he might have been, though it would fit his theological structure more neatly. Therefore whatever theological framework he pursues, the editor would not allow it to drastically override historical considerations. From that it is reasonable to suggest that he did not include Ezra in

¹²⁶T.C.Eskenazi *In An Age Of Prose* 95

Nehemiah 11-13 for the same historical reason. A final inference is that Nehemiah 8-10 was included in the present location, fitting his theological structure, but also because of the observed care that the editor had for historical detail.

ii. The Dating Structure

Returning now to the three influences on the nature of a biblical narrative, (considered at the outset of this section) this section moves on to consider the Aesthetic influence. This relates to the balance and general tidiness within the presentation of the work. Within Ezra-Nehemiah, this is manifested by a noticeable dating structure that runs through Ezra-Nehemiah, which conforms to an identifiable pattern. Each new leader of the people is introduced by the editor of the work with a dating formula that includes the month, year, and king.

The first leader Zerubbabel (Ezra 1-6) is introduced by the story relating to the return from captivity following Cyrus' decree, and contains a precise date in Ch 1:1. The editor then relates his narrative without a specific reference to the date, until he comes to the climax of Zerubbabel's work, which again contains a specific dating formula, Ezra 6:15). The next major leader is Ezra. Again the date reference mentions the reign of the King (Ezra 7:7-8). Following this reference, the passage only uses months as a time reference.¹²⁷ The third major leader that the work Ezra-Nehemiah refers to is Nehemiah. He is again introduced with references mentioning the year, and the King (Nehemiah 1:1 2:1). After that, the texts merely refer to the months¹²⁸ (the years being assumed).

The consistency of this dating scheme across Ezra-Nehemiah implies that it was a product of the editor when collating the sources, and therefore forms an integral part of the editor's message. As this structure implies that Ezra arrived before Nehemiah, then there is no doubt that the editor intended to portray Ezra as coming before Nehemiah.

However, looking again at the dating structures, though their appearance is uniform, their actual format is not. In Ezra 1:1, 7:7, and Nehemiah 5:14 the year and the King are mentioned. In Ezra 7:8 and Nehemiah 2:1 the month and King are mentioned. Ezra 6:15 has the day, month, and year of the King mentioned. Nehemiah 1:1 merely has the month and year, with no king mentioned at all. There are further references pointing to days and specific months within the narrative (e.g. Ezra 6:19) but these do not include year, or king information, and relate to the individual passage. There is then a substantial difference in method of recording these dates that are uniformly spread through the work. Further than this, Blenkinsopp¹²⁹ notes that the actual reference to time in Ezra 1-6 particularly is by

¹²⁷Ezra 7:9 8:31 10:16 10:17 10:19

¹²⁸Nehemiah 7:73 8:2 8:14 9:1

¹²⁹ J. Blenkinsopp *'Ezra-Nehemiah'* 44

number, rather than by name, whereas in Nehemiah 1-6 it is by name. In both Ezra 7-10, (Ezra 7:7-8) and Nehemiah 7-13, (Nehemiah 7:73, 9:113:6) the dates given do not include the name of the month, and often include little information at all.

Nevertheless, the three specific dates that correlate with the three specific reformers, do have a similar style. Ezra 1:1, and 7:7 both give the year, and reigning king. They mark two of the sections of the work. The next significant section is considered to begin in Nehemiah 1:1. There the date reference has the month and year, though no monarch is mentioned. The lack of reference to the monarch could be explained by the fact that Artaxerxes is still the monarch (assuming the unity of the work). The reference to month here merely is to be contrasted with Nehemiah 2:1 where the editor wants to note the passing of time more precisely than previously. There is then an overall unity of reference. Where the style of presentation differs, it may only point to the overall editorial work, where the same King is being referred to by the same author in Ezra 7:7, and Nehemiah 1:1.

An exception to the identified dating structure occurs in Nehemiah 5:14, which gives a summary of the years that Nehemiah was in Judah during his first stay. It gives the year and Kings reign (as do the general references in Ezra 1:1, and 7:7). Interestingly, this is balanced by a similar summary passage in Ezra 4 (again giving year and Kings reign - e.g. Ezra 4:24). This balance suggests a further aesthetic arrangement. Nehemiah 1-6, relating to the restoration of the walls, carries much historical activity, and inevitably has to be selective. Ezra 1-6 has the same difficulty. Both sections have been given a summary chapter, each of which has specific dating references within it, external to the main schema, but necessary for the historical unravelling of the summary narrative in those passages. The passages Ezra 7-10, and Nehemiah 7-13 relate more to Law giving, and application. They contain no summaries identified in the same way.

In both types of aesthetic structure considered here, the structure and pattern are governed by historical considerations. There is therefore no doubt that there is a specific literary framework in the book Ezra-Nehemiah, which also has historical significance. The section will now turn to consider whether the historical structure is a later addition, or in harmony with the theological structure.

3. A Correlation Of The Historical And Literary Structures

This section has so far considered the existence of a specific deliberate dating structure within the book Ezra-Nehemiah, placed there by the editor. It has also considered the existence of an overall theological structure of the book. These two considerations now need correlation to understand the significance of the theological outline in relation to

history. In other words, is the historical order of interest to the editor, or does theological purpose play a far more significant part, thus negating any historical implications?

An examination of the overall literary structure of the book of Ezra-Nehemiah demonstrated the existence of certain divisions (Ezra 1.7-6.22, Ezra 7.1-10.44, Nehemiah 1.1-7.5 Nehemiah 7:6-13:31). The proposed dating structure also produces a historical sectionalization of the book from the following references Ezra 1:1, Ezra 7:7-8, Nehemiah 1:1 2:1. The dating references therefore correspond to the suggested Literary outline of the book Ezra-Nehemiah as shown in the table.

Literary Outline	Ezra 1:7-6:22	Ezra 7:1-10:44	Nehemiah 1:1-6:19	Nehemiah 7:1-13:31
Dating Outline	Ezra 1:1and 6:15	Ezra 7:7	Nehemiah 1:1	Nehemiah 13:6

The similarity of these references (except for a dating reference in Nehemiah 7) shows that the dating structure illustrated above, is clearly an integral part of the editorial work. The editor was therefore presenting a chronological history of the return, at the same time as a theological one. The Theological outline, while having a significant message in itself, is not dominant over the historical details, but relates another aspect of those historical details. The one exception to this occurs in the Nehemiah 7:1-13:31 section identified from the literary outline. There is no obvious dating reference to match, for the narrative continues from chapter 6, though with a different theme. The following narrative relates (according to the plain reading of the existing text) to the period immediately following. For the dating structure, (which focuses on the arrival of reformers) the next significant event is the return of Nehemiah to Susa in Nehemiah 13:6 which has a similar dating structure to Ezra 1,7, and Nehemiah 1. Therefore the literary section Nehemiah 7:1-13:31 does have its own dating reference, but due to the apparent historical continuity of the passage, it does not occur until Nehemiah 13:6.

Conclusion

The Literary outline of the book of Ezra-Nehemiah demonstrates the unity of the two books. As has been discussed, this does not necessarily mean that the narrative is a reflection of chronological reality, but may be better described as historiographical. Eskenazi¹³⁰ defines historiography as

"The ordering of experience as history arises out of a desire to have real events display the coherence, integrity, fullness, and closure of an image of life that is, and can only be imaginary ... Hence historiography is a literary construct, rather than a mirror of reality."

¹³⁰T.C.Eskenazi *In An Age Of Prose* 6

The linking of the specific dating references to the editor's own literary framework demonstrates that the work, while being historiographical, also has a chronological reality that was important in the mind of the editor. This suggests that the author's presentation of Ezra coming before Nehemiah would be accurate both theologically and historically.

Several conclusions are possible therefore

i. The literary structure of the book Ezra-Nehemiah makes a very definite presentation, of the changes within Jewish society in the post-exilic period. To do this, the work represents Ezra as coming before, and contemporaneously with Nehemiah. This is made for theological purposes, but matches the historical ordering given in the book.

ii. The reference in Ezra 7:7-8 is the editor's initial time reference to the work of Ezra. This reference comes within a specific framework where the author shows his intention to locate Ezra before Nehemiah within his work. Given the literary and dating structures within the work Ezra-Nehemiah, the author deliberately presents the date reference in Ezra 7:7-8 to refer to King Artaxerxes I.

Therefore a date of 458 BCE for Ezra's arrival in Jerusalem is most likely, and 428 or 398 BCE are both unlikely.

SECTION D

The Historical Implications Of A United Ezra-Nehemiah

The previous sections have considered the links between the works Ezra and Nehemiah, and conclude that the works intentionally present the theological and chronological sequence of events as the final editor of the works considered it to be. Such a conclusion carries a significant implication for the relative dates of Ezra and Nehemiah's arrival in Jerusalem. This is because the accounts as they stand, in the order that the editor presented them, suggest that Ezra came before Nehemiah in 458 BCE.

The close identity between the theological and historical structures within Ezra-Nehemiah makes it very unlikely that the editor structured his work without attributing significance to the historical order of events. Therefore the only probable scenario by which by the order of events presented in Ezra-Nehemiah is *not* the historical one, is where the editor was genuinely mistaken.

However, the situation is still more problematical, for in order for this scenario to be possible, the editor himself has to be confused. However, the level of confusion required to explain the suggested chronological disruption in Ezra-Nehemiah goes beyond mere editorial confusion. As the book Ezra-Nehemiah was a published work, the population had to accept the confusion in the historian's mind. This implies that there is no clear understanding of the chronology of these events among his audience either.

In order for this to have happened; it is necessary to assume that the editor was not writing within living memory of the event.¹³¹ A complete generation at the least must have passed to confuse the actual order within the editor's sources, his mind, and in the mind of his readers. Therefore the date of the editor's writing is highly significant. An early date would not give enough time for this generation to have passed away, making this suggestion very unlikely. However, a late date for the editor's work makes it far more possible.

¹³¹ This does assume that the editor was arranging his material chronologically as well as theologically, and that the reader, with all the dating references within Ezra-Nehemiah stressing days and months, as well as years, would understand this to be the case. This assumption arises out of the conclusions to the previous section. It is recognised to be an assumption, and therefore reflects an intrinsic weakness to this discussion.

1. Time Of Writing.

Due to the absence of overt Greek influence or reference to the fall of the Persian Empire, the latest possible date of the final editorial work is soon after the close of the Persian period. The evidence that the work Ezra-Nehemiah was drawn from a different source to 1 Esdras (chapter 4 section A) also places the final editorial work at around the same time. This puts a final date of around 300 BCE for completion of the work. There are a few scholars¹³² who would give 200 BCE as the final date, based on the reference in Ben Sira (Sir 47:8-10) thought to be dependent on 1 Chronicles 23-29. Ben Sira is dated to 180 BCE, giving a latest date for the Chronicler's work at around 200 BCE. This is relevant only if Ezra-Nehemiah is seen as a continuation of the Chronicler's work. Such a date would then be a latest possible date, and then only on certain assumptions.

Another indicator for the date of the editorial work depends on the list of priests recorded in Nehemiah 12:10 ff. Josephus¹³³ identified the Jaddua named here with the High Priest in the time of Alexander the Great in 333 BCE. However, this identification is uncertain, and most scholars today¹³⁴ question Josephus' chronology at this point. Indeed, Albright¹³⁵ concludes that this date is the latest reasonable date, when he says that

"All internal and linguistic objections to dating the final redaction of the Chronicler's work after the early fourth century have been disproved by recent archaeological research".

The issue is complicated by the fact that different scholars refer to different editorial works when discussing this issue. They can refer to either the date of completion of the work Chronicles-Ezra-Nehemiah, or that of Ezra-Nehemiah, or that of the Chronicler alone. This makes statements by different scholars over the date of writing difficult to compare.

Without going into the background on the editorship and date of the editor it is impossible to take this line of reasoning further. It is only possible to state that the latest generally accepted date for the final work is at latest 300 BCE¹³⁶ with the extreme dates varying from 440-250 BCE. For the next subsection, three dates will be referred to, namely 440¹³⁷, 350¹³⁸, and 250¹³⁹ BCE, from the earliest possible, to the latest possible, with a mid-point date of around 350 BCE as the most likely scenario.

¹³²L.H. Brockington discusses this possibility *Ezra, Nehemiah and Esther* 25

¹³³Josephus 'Antiquities of the Jews' *Works* xi viii 5

¹³⁴E.g. H.G.M. Williamson *Ezra, Nehemiah* 363

¹³⁵W.F. Albright *The Biblical Period From Abraham to Ezra* 95

¹³⁶H.G.M. Williamson *Ezra, Nehemiah* xxxvi

¹³⁷Japhet is linked with this date by L.L. Grabbe *Judaism from Cyrus to Hadrian* 32

¹³⁸as a mid-point date between the two opposite extreme possibilities

¹³⁹L.H. Brockington's discussion means that this possibility needs to be entertained
Ezra, Nehemiah and Esther 25

2. How far Away From The Events Was The Editor?

In order for the historical information in the sources to have become confused in the mind of the editor and readers, the editor must have lived after living memory of the events. Sixty years seems a reasonable (if arbitrary) limit here, though the life span of those remembering the events could conceivably be as much as 80 years. The second generation from the events would also be unlikely to be able to make such a major mistake. This would bring the limit up to around 120 years. The third generation from the events begins the period where people are more likely to have been confused over the order of events.¹⁴⁰

Therefore, any time span less than 120 years from the events to the editorial work, would appear too short for confusion. However, with events of such religious magnitude, there is uncertainty whether even three generations is sufficient time for confusion over the historical order of events. There is (to consider a comparable example) no doubt in the minds of today's generation over the relative order of Napoleon and Bismarck, such as is considered to exist between Ezra-Nehemiah. It would be impossible to consider any confusion existing today about the Kaiser and Hitler; for they are still within living memory.

3. The Application Of The Time Gap To The Possible Dates

Having quantified some figures; they need to be applied to the three possible dates for Ezra's arrival in Jerusalem, 398, 428, or 458 BCE to see whether there could have been enough time for the editor to have been genuinely mistaken.

a. Ezra's arrival in 398 BCE

If Ezra came to Jerusalem in 398 BCE and lived only long enough to complete his mission (the events of which can fit into one year), then he died at the earliest, in 397 BCE. The time elapsing between this date and the writing of the work demonstrates how likely it is that the editor was confused over his sources. 397 BCE is already past one end of the range of possible dates for the editorial work (440-250 BCE). There is still 147 years before the opposite end of the range (250 BCE). That time gap could be considered sufficient to confuse the order of events. However this 250 BCE date is the extreme possibility and earlier dates are more likely. The most likely date for writing, as considered above, is around 350 BCE, merely 47 years after the event. This is certainly too soon for the editor to have made such a fundamental mistake as to suggest that Ezra came before Nehemiah, when (in this case) Ezra came in 398 BCE. Therefore taking the 398 BCE date for Ezra's arrival, it is only possible to consider a confusion in the editor's mind if either the

¹⁴⁰in that Ezra became a notable religious hero in later Judaism, and that this period was a turning point for Israel as a nation

latest possible date for his work, or the earliest possible date of Ezra's death are considered. This makes the scenario unlikely, as it relies on the greatest extremes in each case.

b. Ezra's arrival in 428 BCE

Taking an earlier date for Ezra's arrival in 428 BCE (37th year of Artaxerxes I) after Nehemiah, and adding the bare year's life span necessary to complete the mission, gives an earliest date of 427 BCE for his death. This gives a maximum time gap of 177 years, enough time for the editor to have been confused. However, again the most likely date for writing, of around 350 BCE is only 77 years later at most. This is only within the life span of one generation of the events, and might conceivably be just within living memory. This scenario is possible, but still requires the latest possible date for the editorial work of 250 BCE. Again as such a scenario relies on extreme dates, it is to be considered less likely.

c. Ezra's arrival in 458 BCE

The earliest date for Ezra's arrival is 458 BCE. Adding one year's additional life span gives a date of 457 BCE for Ezra's death. This gives a large time gap of 107 years to the most likely date of writing - 350 BCE. This represents sufficient time for a generation to have passed, and confusion to have begun in the minds of the people.

However, the editor presents Ezra as arriving before Nehemiah, which this scenario also does. There is therefore no requirement here to suppose that the editor was confused in his presentation, because the account presents Ezra as coming before Nehemiah, as this chronological scenario also does.

So in conclusion, the editor is unlikely to have accidentally confused the two reformers. There is only enough time for confusion to occur if the largest possible time gap is considered, and by taking the most extreme time gap between the events, and their recording. Such a position is unlikely, when most of the scholars reject the 250 BCE date for the editorial work.

4. The Problems With Public Awareness Of Events

Before leaving this issue, it is worth considering a final point. If Nehemiah predated Ezra, when the work indicated to the contrary, then the Editor published a historically inaccurate work, which became accepted as canonical writing, and not rejected by his readership. Such a reception by the Jews would seem to be unlikely were it based on such a fundamental error as confusing the order of two of Israel's greatest leaders. The publication of the Editor's work within such a short time, points to Ezra coming before Nehemiah, and that is what the Editor implies.

However, this assumes that the editor released his work immediately, in a format that would be available for all to read. Rowley¹⁴¹ comments that

"It is very unlikely that many copies of the Editor's work would be made for some time, and the chance of those which were made of falling into the hands of the oldest inhabitants would not be great. Nor would the Editor have been greatly moved if they did."

This suggestion means that the population never had a corrective influence on the work, and makes it easier to consider that an individual was personally confused. The real problem lies later on, when time had passed, and the true chronology was no longer clear. Then this chronologically confused, but theologically encouraging work became able to be more widely appreciated.

However Rowley makes assumptions here which have to be challenged. In even the most academically restricted circles there would have been some who would have known Ezra for many years after his death. It is likely that these would have become the priests and their families, the very people likely to have read this document written by the editor (especially if he is to be identified with the Chronicler, and was writing with a Priestly emphasis in mind).¹⁴²

Conclusions

Given that the text seems to imply that Ezra and Nehemiah were contemporaries, with Ezra predating Nehemiah, there are three possible conclusions.

- i. The face value reading is correct. If this is the case, then only a 458 BCE date is possible.
- ii. The editor was confused and misrepresented the true order (Nehemiah-Ezra). If this is the case, then a 398 BCE date is very unlikely though the 428 BCE date is just possible.
- iii. The editor deliberately misrepresented the true order (Nehemiah-Ezra) for theological reasons. In this case, then either a 428 or 398 BCE date is possible. The previous section and this one, both reasoned against this, that the theological and chronological structures within the work were written by the same man, at the same time, and were parallel.

¹⁴¹H.H.Rowley (ed.) *The Old Testament and Modern Study* 139

¹⁴²J. Blenkinsopp *Ezra-Nehemiah* 51

CHAPTER TWO

SUMMARY

This chapter has considered evidence arising from a structural survey of the work Ezra-Nehemiah, and its implications for the date of Ezra's arrival in Jerusalem. The following conclusions have been reached.

1. The link with Chronicles is too much in doubt to demonstrate any clear link between the books, which means that any conclusions drawn from the connection of Chronicles with Ezra-Nehemiah are uncertain.
2. There does appear to be a link between Ezra and Nehemiah, which carries with it the implication that Ezra predates Nehemiah, because of the specific dating structure running through the work Ezra-Nehemiah.
3. The literary structure of the work Ezra-Nehemiah, while written for a literary and theological purpose, also places Ezra before Nehemiah.
4. The debate suggests that the literary structure parallels the historical one, and so the editor had no reason to deliberately misrepresent the sources in his work.
5. It appears unlikely that the editor mistakenly misrepresented his sources, and that the structure of the work he placed upon the material therefore represents either the true historical structure, or a deliberate misrepresentation of the true historical structure.

Therefore the structure of the work Ezra-Nehemiah presents Ezra coming before Nehemiah to Jerusalem. This is presented by the editor by a clear literary structure, for clear theological, and historical reasons.

The table below is a summary of the indications that have arisen so far. On the basis that Nehemiah arrived in 445 BCE, the three main alternative dates¹⁴³ for Ezra are 458, 428, 398 BCE.

¹⁴³These dates are taken as the typical dates theorised, when Ezra could have arrived in Jerusalem. 458 BCE in the 7th year of Artaxerxes I, 428 BCE in the 37th year of Artaxerxes I, and 398 BCE in the 7th year of Artaxerxes II. These dates will be taken as the standard representations of these three main positions throughout the thesis.

Section Heading	Ezra's arrival in ... 458 BCE	428 BCE	398 BCE
Section A	no conclusions can be drawn		
Section B	possible	not likely	not likely
Section C	possible	not likely	not likely
Section D	possible	not likely	not likely

From the structural discussion, it is apparent therefore that the book of Ezra-Nehemiah while possibly not being a continuation of the work of the Chronicler, does present Ezra as coming before Nehemiah. It does this without fear of contradiction from its first readership. The only date that really allows the apparent structure to be a true reflection of the events is for Ezra to have arrived in Jerusalem in 458 BCE.

Additionally, there are no real indications that the structure is anything but a true reflection of the events on both theological, and historical levels.

A literary investigation therefore appears to suggest that the editor, and his readers believed that Ezra arrived in Jerusalem in 458 BCE.

C H A P T E R T H R E E

SPECIFIC BIBLICAL PASSAGES RELATING TO THE DATES OF EZRA AND NEHEMIAH

The purpose of this Chapter is to examine the evidence that arises out of a study of references within Ezra-Nehemiah for the relative dating of Ezra's and Nehemiah's arrival in Jerusalem. Many issues arising from the biblical text have been raised over the years, and taken as support for one date or another for Ezra's arrival in Jerusalem. Some of these rely on assumptions made in other areas (the issue of Ezra's and Nehemiah's contemporaneity is particularly influential to several other areas of investigation); others are entirely separate. Each section within this chapter will discuss an individual issue, analyse it, and consider its implications for the relative dating of Ezra's and Nehemiah's arrival in Jerusalem. Finally, at the end of the chapter, a summary will draw together the implications of each section, correlate them, and indicate the most likely conclusion based on all the different sections.

The issue discussed in each section will be considered on its merits. However, where the findings from one section directly influence another, the implications from the earlier section will be indicated. These thoughts will then be correlated more fully in the conclusion to the chapter. This approach highlights the cumulative nature of the material (the fundamental assertion of the thesis), and the inter-dependencies of the individual points, thus enabling a reasoned conclusion to be reached.

SECTION A

The Importance Of Nehemiah's Date For Ezra

In the discussion of the relative dating of Ezra and Nehemiah's arrival in Jerusalem, the issues have in the past been greatly complicated by the variability of dates for both Ezra and Nehemiah. However, it is now widely accepted that Nehemiah arrived in Jerusalem in 445 BCE. Modern scholarship virtually unanimously¹⁴⁴ confirms the identification of Nehemiah's date with the reign of Artaxerxes I. Saley¹⁴⁵, who considers otherwise, opens his paper by commenting that

"it has been held virtually indisputable since the publication of the Elephantine papyri (1906 on) that the king under whom Nehemiah laboured was Artaxerxes I. The basis for this identification is the occurrence of the names of Johanan, Sanballat, and his sons, Delaiah and Shelemiah, in a papyrus dated to 407 BC"

This is for several reasons, namely; the evidence of the Aramaic Documents from Elephantine, the discovery of artefacts, and the Wadi ed-Daliyeh papyri. The evidence from these sources is summarised briefly below.

1. The Elephantine Papyri

According to a papyrus from Elephantine,¹⁴⁶ in 408 BCE Sanballat was governor of Samaria in name only, being an old man. The work (for all practical purposes) was in the hands of his two sons, Delaiah and Shelemaiah. The papyrus reads as follows:

"We have also set the whole matter forth in a letter in our name to Delaiah and Shelemaiah the sons of Sanballat the governor of Samaria"

It is certain therefore that Sanballat could not have been an active governor in the reign of Artaxerxes II (405-359 BCE). However Nehemiah records Sanballat as an active governor (Nehemiah 6:1-14). Therefore Sanballat has to have been younger in Nehemiah's day than the time of this papyrus. The papyri date Sanballat to 408 BCE, placing Nehemiah before that date. As the papyri were written before the reign of Artaxerxes II, Nehemiah must have come to Jerusalem in the reign of Artaxerxes I. This is how the debate stood, until Saley pointed out that there were other Sanballats known from the Wadi ed-Daliyeh papyri that Nehemiah might be referring too.

¹⁴⁴A. Demsky 'Who Came First, Ezra or Nehemiah ? The Synchronistic Approach' HUCA 3 B.Reike *The New Testament Era* 18

J.A.Soggin *An Introduction To The History Of Israel* 287

L.L.Grabbe *Judaism from Cyrus to Hadrian* 131

¹⁴⁵ R.J.Saley 'The Date of Nehemiah reconsidered' *Essays* 151

¹⁴⁶Cowley papyrus 30, which shows that by 408, Sanballat's sons were governing in Sanballat's place.

2. The Wadi ed-Daliyeh Papyri

The Samaria Papyri from Wadi ed-Daliyeh, dated from coins and inscriptions within the cave, were written in 332 BCE. It is possible from these manuscripts to determine the sequence of Governors of Samaria from Sanballat the Horonite, in the time of Nehemiah, to Alexander the Great, in 332 (La Sor).¹⁴⁷ Unfortunately it appears that there may be several 'Sanballats' to whom references can be attributed. Saley¹⁴⁸ comments that

"With the discovery of the Wadi Daliyeh papyri the presence of a Sanballat II as governor of Samaria under Artaxerxes II has been substantiated ... there would seem to be no valid objection to accepting a Sanballat III under Darius III".

If Nehemiah cannot be positively linked to the Sanballat of Artaxerxes I, then questions arise over the links with Bigvai, Johanan, and the marriage of Sanballat's daughter into the priestly line. The way becomes open to hypothesise other individuals of these names in a later generation. While they do fit the fifth century, it is possible to suggest that there are similar links that could be made in the fourth century also. This becomes especially possible considering Josephus's evidence.

3. Josephus

The occurrence of the name Bigvai, or Bagoas, as governor of Judah;¹⁴⁹ shows that by 408 BCE, Nehemiah cannot have been governor of Jerusalem. This is because Josephus¹⁵⁰ connects the viceroy Bagoses, together with the High Priest (Ιωαννης). The book of Nehemiah places Johanan (considered the same person Ιωαννης) after Nehemiah, and the Elephantine papyrus¹⁵¹ shows that Bigvai dates to 408 BCE. Nehemiah therefore has to have been governor of Judah before 408 BCE.

However, there has been doubt cast against the identification of Josephus' Bagoses, and Ιωαννης. This will be discussed further in chapter 4 section B. It is sufficient here to say that Josephus may have become confused over Persian history, telescoping several generations together. The historical references he makes, may relate on to the mid fourth century, while appearing to pass directly on after the reign of Artaxerxes I.

If this is the case, then the references Josephus makes could all be reconstructed into a scenario that allows Nehemiah to have arrived in the reign of Artaxerxes II.

¹⁴⁷La Sor *Old Testament Survey* 652

¹⁴⁸R.J.Saley 'The Date of Nehemiah reconsidered' *Essays* 155

¹⁴⁹A.E.Cowley *Aramaic Papyri* 108

¹⁵⁰Josephus 'Antiquities of the Jews' *Works* xi vii 1

¹⁵¹A.E.Cowley *Aramaic Papyri* 108

4. Archaeological Artefacts

In relation to the dating of Nehemiah, an important discovery was made when an inscription identified the name of Geshem the Arab. The reference dates to 400 BCE, and therefore places Geshem the Arab, ally of Sanballat and enemy of Nehemiah (Nehemiah 2:19, 6:1-6) in the first half of the 5th century. The Sanballat, Geshem and Nehemiah in view therefore belong to the first half of the 5th century, and therefore to the reign of Artaxerxes I. Cross¹⁵² considers that

"the discovery of a silver bowl inscribed by "Qaynu son of Gasm [biblical Gesem, Gasmu], King of Qedar" would appear to settle the matter finally."

Saley¹⁵³ is not so certain here, suggesting that the methods used to date the bowl are insufficient

"None of these we feel is able to fix the bowl precisely in the late fifth century as opposed to the early fourth."

However, he appears to be making the most of uncertainties here to lessen the significance of the bowl; for it suggests that Nehemiah did come in the reign of Artaxerxes I.

Conclusion

From this evidence, Nehemiah's arrival in Jerusalem in the reign of Artaxerxes I, which was once conclusively established, is now more suspect. The reference in Nehemiah 2:1 establishes the date for his arrival only in relation to Artaxerxes. However, while there is a doubt, the weight of evidence still appears to suggest Nehemiah's arrival in the reign of Artaxerxes I. All the characters and their relationships may be duplicated in the fourth century, and Josephus may have telescoped his references, thus confusing our understanding. However, the links between the Elephantine papyri of 407 BCE, and Nehemiah's Sanballat are still perfectly possible. Added to that, the bowl found, while not definitively dated, has been linked to the fifth century, thus positively tying Nehemiah in to the fifth century and Artaxerxes I. This then suggests 445 BCE for his date of arrival. It cannot be described as a firm conclusion, but certainly appears to fit the references as well as, if not better than the alternative that Saley proposes.

Nehemiah's date has great significance for the date of Ezra for the following reasons:

1. There is only one variable in the debate as to which reformer arrived in Jerusalem first. The debate now hinges on the date of Ezra's arrival. This simplifies the possible options for each issue, and makes a conclusion more possible.

¹⁵²F.M.Cross 'A Reconstruction of the Judean Restoration' *JBL* 7

¹⁵³R.J.Saley 'The Date of Nehemiah reconsidered' *Essays* 163

2. The literary unity of the book of Ezra-Nehemiah (considered in the previous chapter) suggests that the references to Artaxerxes in the Ezra memoir are linked to those found in the Nehemiah memoirs. The evidence above now shows that the author definitely uses the term 'Artaxerxes' for Artaxerxes I in Nehemiah. This makes it likely that he refers to the same king in for example, Ezra 7:7. This consideration is taken up further in section C of this chapter.

SECTION B

The Context Of The Reference To Artaxerxes In Ezra 7:7-8

The dating reference in Ezra 7:7-8 occurs within the context of an editorial work. The work does make other references to 'the king'. An examination of these other references might help determine the identity of Artaxerxes in Ezra 7:7-8, if it can be shown that another reference in the same work has identified Artaxerxes conclusively.

1. The Ezra Memoirs

i. Ezra 7

Four references to the King occur in Ezra 7 itself, where all appear to refer to the same Artaxerxes, because they all arise from the same context. They do not therefore add anything to the context of Ezra 7:7-8, but act as mere repetition of the reference.

ii. Ezra 8

A further reference occurs in Ezra 8:1, but this again refers to the same event as chapter seven. Therefore it adds nothing to the debate.

2. Ezra 1-6

Williamson and Blenkinsopp¹⁵⁴ among others, assume that the final editor drew this passage together from an inventory of Temple vessels, a list of returnees, Aramaic correspondence, Cyrus' decree, editorial comment, and possibly records from Zerubbabel. From this the editor went on to use the Ezra memoirs to produce the complete book of Ezra. Chapters 1-6 are clearly reliant on source documents, differences of opinion bear on the identity and date of the editor. The link with chapters 7-10, and the Ezra memoir has been considered in chapter 2 section C, and there it was concluded that Ezra 1-6, 7-10, and Nehemiah, were written by the same editor. Therefore the reference in chapter 6¹⁵⁵, clearly implies that both references are to the same king, in the editors' original intention (whether one assumes continuous authorship between Ezra 6 and 7, or an editor seeking to maintain unity of expression).

i. Which Artaxerxes does Ezra 6:14 mention?

¹⁵⁴H.G.M. Williamson *Ezra and Nehemiah* 30-33
J. Blenkinsopp *Ezra-Nehemiah* 41

¹⁵⁵mentioning the name Artaxerxes, which is apparently identical to chapter 7:7, with no distinctive identification of Artaxerxes

Ezra 6:14 refers to the work of the exiles before Ezra's return, and occurs in a passage coming from an earlier source than the Ezra memoir. It is the final reference to Artaxerxes in the passage before Ezra 7:7-8. It therefore forms the immediate context of the reference in Ezra 7.

The editor links his reference to Artaxerxes here to other figures in history whose dates are known. This is a technique used to identify individuals, that was noted in the previous section. Ezra 6:14 lists what appears to be the first 3 kings of the Persian Empire namely, Cyrus, Darius, and Artaxerxes. This seems to indicate that the king mentioned is Artaxerxes I, as the list begins with Cyrus who was the first king of the empire after the defeat of the Babylonians.

ii. Ezra 4:7,11,23

Chapter four is written in a demonstrably non-chronological way, apparently summing up the various stages of opposition to all the work in Israel. As previously noted (chapter 2 section C) there are two summary sections within Ezra-Nehemiah (Ezra 4, and Nehemiah 5:14-18) which have been placed there with the apparent purpose of glossing over large periods of history relatively quickly. They also both deal with a single specific topic, and how that was to affect the people over a period. Ezra 4 relates to opposition to the Temple building, and Nehemiah 5 to governorship of the province. They do not indicate poor historical knowledge on the part of the editor, merely an editorial summary of a particular theme.

As a summary chapter, it is also possible to gain a wide sweep of the history of the period, and therefore determine which Artaxerxes is being referred to in the work.

The chapter lists Ahasuerus (usually known as Xerxes)¹⁵⁶ as King, followed by Artaxerxes. If this order is correct, then Ezra 4:7,11,23 refer to Xerxes I and Artaxerxes I; for Ahasuerus most probably refers to Xerxes I. Therefore a reference to Artaxerxes following Xerxes, necessarily becomes Artaxerxes I. These are the only kings of their name to follow each other directly. It is true that history knows of a Xerxes II, followed by an Artaxerxes II, but there were 2 kings and 25 years between these two monarchs. Therefore this reference also points to Artaxerxes I.

3. Nehemiah

Assuming the literary unity of the work Ezra-Nehemiah, the references in the rest of the work of Nehemiah also form a context for the references found in Ezra to Artaxerxes.

¹⁵⁶D.J.A. Clines *Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther* 76

There are three references to Artaxerxes found in Nehemiah 2:1, 5:14, and 13:6. For the latter two references, the editor assumes knowledge of the identity of the ruler. That assumption is based on the editor's identification of Artaxerxes in Ch 2:1. From evidence discussed in chapter 3 section A, this reference certainly refers to Artaxerxes I.

Conclusion

In conclusion, within the work Ezra-Nehemiah, wherever the editor refers to Artaxerxes, and the king is identifiable with reasonable certainty, it is most probably Artaxerxes I. There is no certain reference to Artaxerxes II, and so there is no reason from the context of the other references within Ezra-Nehemiah to suggest that Artaxerxes II is in view in Ezra 7:7-8. Relating this conclusion back into the previous section, it now seems almost certain from the combination of the two sections, that Ezra 7:7-8 relates to the 7th year of Artaxerxes I. Therefore dates of 398 or 428 BCE look unlikely.

SECTION C

The Interpretation Of Ezra 7:7-8

The conclusion of the preceding section discussed the relationship between the Artaxerxes of Ezra-Nehemiah, and the specific reference in Ezra 7:7-8. That section considered Artaxerxes I the most likely identification for the king in Ezra 7:7-8, in view of the relationship within the work Ezra-Nehemiah. This section goes on to consider the reference in Ezra 7:7-8 in detail.

1. To Which Artaxerxes Does The Text Refer?

Ezra 7:7-8 states that Ezra came to Jerusalem in the 7th year of Artaxerxes, which appears to be simple and conclusive evidence that Ezra arrived in Jerusalem in 458 BCE, the 7th year of Artaxerxes I. This assumes that the Artaxerxes in Ezra 7:7 is to be identified with the Artaxerxes I in the book of Nehemiah.

However if the identification of Artaxerxes I in Nehemiah cannot be linked to Ezra 7:7-8, then a reference to Artaxerxes II (405-359 BCE) becomes possible. That is a natural reading of the text. If the references in Nehemiah to Artaxerxes I are not linked contextually to Ezra, and any suggestion of the contemporaneity of Ezra and Nehemiah removed, then the identification of Artaxerxes in Ezra 7 is contingent solely on presuppositions. There is no specific evidence in the text.

i. The Lack Of A Designation I or II.

Ezra 7:7-8 nowhere refers to Artaxerxes as the I, II, or III, and neither does it anywhere clearly imply that any particular Artaxerxes is in view. Due to the lack of any qualifier on the title, the simplest reading would seem to require the reading 'Artaxerxes I'. However, the technique for designating the identity of rulers in the time of writing was different from methods employed today. Biblical authors used three methods in differentiating kings with the same name, as can be seen from the example of Jeroboam I and Jeroboam II. The methods used in the Hebrew canon are as follows.

a/ By Giving A Patronymic

The second Jeroboam is identified as Joash's son on the first occasion that the author of 2 Kings introduces him (2 Kings 13:13), and the earlier Jeroboam as 'son of Nebat' (2 Kings 14:24). The author of Chronicles does the same (2 Chronicles 13:6, 2 Chronicles 9:29). This is also true of the prophetic books, where there is no prior context (Amos 1:1, Hosea 1:1). This is also true regarding non-Israelite rulers. The different Ben-Hadad's are

identified by patronymic. One Ben-Hadad is mentioned in 1 Kings 15:18, and a different one in 2 Kings 13:25. The difference is noted by patronymic.

b/ By Context

After introducing and identifying the kings, when the identity is clear in the mind of the reader, the author allows the historical context to determine the identity of the king. The king's activity relates to the king that is defined by the context of the passage (2 Kings 14:28). Alternatively, theological context can be used, for example, 'walking after the ways of Jeroboam' (1 Kings 16:19), which is a clear reference to Jeroboam I, due to his particular characteristics. Jeroboam I is the king known in the books of Kings for his sin that influenced the dynasty. Again, this is noted in a reference to foreign rulers. Ben-Hadad having been identified by patronymic earlier, is usually simply referred to as Ben-Hadad, or possibly as Ben-Hadad king of Syria (1 Kings 15:20).

/ Cross Referencing To Other Kings

Another technique of this period is to link the name of the insufficiently identified king, with a well-identified king. The Chronicler does this (1 Chronicles 5:17) in the case of Jeroboam, by reference to the Judean king Jotham, thus clarifying the identification of Jeroboam as Jeroboam II. Within the context of foreign kings, this takes the form of a reference to the Israelite, or Judahite king that is involved in the politics of the time (1 Kings 20:2, 2 Chronicles 16:2, 2 Chronicles 22:6).

ii. Without Designation Which Artaxerxes Is Meant?

Applying these techniques to Ezra 7:7-8, it is seen that it has no mention of any 'son of' formula. There is also no reference to another king, or historical figure, whose dates can be cross referenced, nor is any pointed distinction of a different Artaxerxes made. Therefore the author of Ezra 7:7 has probably identified his reference to Artaxerxes by context. The earlier references to Artaxerxes in Ezra Ch 1-6, as well as the continuing context in Nehemiah, are sufficient identification in the mind of the author for the reader to correctly identify Artaxerxes. In the surrounding context, Artaxerxes I appears to be the King intended. Therefore it appears that the editor referred to Artaxerxes I when he wrote his editorial comment in Ezra 7:1-10. This position will be considered in more detail in the next section.

2. Textual Uncertainty

Another issue concerning Ezra 7:7-8 relates not so much to the identity of the King, but to the length of the King's reign. There is a possibility that the text in Ezra 7:7-8 is corrupt,

and that instead of the reading 'seventh year' in the Masoretic text, the reading '37th'¹⁵⁷ was original. There are several reasons for suspecting that the reference to the seventh year is not necessarily accurate.

I. Parablepsis

The process of parablepsis could cause 'thirty-seven' to be misread as 'seven'. This is because in Hebrew the words 'year', and 'seven' both begin with the letter ש. It is possible (Bright)¹⁵⁸ that 'thirty' could be present in the original text, but when the scribes copied the text, they overlooked it and went onto the final word (seven), due to the initial letters being the same.

In the Masoretic Text¹⁵⁹ the Hebrew reads בשנת שבע ('in the seventh year'), but it would have read like this, בשנת שלשים ושבע had it originally referred to the 37th year. The theory proposes that the eye of the scribe passed over the first of the two words beginning with ש to the ש in the final word.

However, as seen above, in the text as it now stands, the word for 'year' begins with an inseparable preposition 'in' seen in the Hebrew text as a letter ב, and not with the letter ש. Additionally, in the proposed text the word for 'seven' would also begin with a conjunction ו. Therefore it appears unlikely that the scribe could pass over the word 'thirty' by parablepsis because the words would not begin with the same letter, which the process of parablepsis requires. In commenting on this recourse to parablepsis, rather than the alternative options of the verse referring to the seventh year of either Artaxerxes I or II, Williamson¹⁶⁰ comments that

"The theory demands a totally unsupported textual emendation of Ezra 7.7-8, and therefore faces from the outset the drawback of special pleading. From the point of view of method, it should not even be considered unless both other alternatives are shown to be impossible."

Brockington¹⁶¹ is quite dismissive of any theory that should suggest textual corruption when he says

"Any suggestion that the numeral should be deemed corrupt and twenty-seven (Rudolph) or thirty-seven (Bright and others) be read in its place is made in the interests of theory and should be resisted."

¹⁵⁷J. Bright *History Of Israel* 402

¹⁵⁸J. Bright *History of Israel* 402

¹⁵⁹*Biblica Hebraica Stuttgartensia*

¹⁶⁰H.G.M. Williamson *Ezra, Nehemiah* xl

¹⁶¹L.H. Brockington *Ezra, Nehemiah and Esther* 29-30

Further, in verse 8 the number seven appears again. So, for this theory to be correct, the same mistake must have been made in verse 8, which is statistically unlikely. The suggestion that the word 'seven' was originally another number seems unlikely, certainly on the grounds of parablepsis. Demsky¹⁶² considers that the parablepsis could not be considered in this case, when he says

"From a linguistic point of view, the emendation would not apply to vs. 8, which uses the ordinal number שביעית (;seventh'), for in Biblical Hebrew we never find this form above the number ten. A proposed שלושים ושביעית is out of the question, though שבע ושלושים or שבע ושלושים is possible. We would have to assume, therefore, that vs.8 was altered repeatedly."

Therefore, without other evidence suggesting that the text is corrupt; the word 'seven' is the most likely reading of the reference. This then makes a date of 428 BCE (the 37th year of Artaxerxes) for Ezra's arrival unlikely as it relies on a textual corruption of this sort.

. Possible Evidence Of Textual Emendation

The repetition of the date in v.8, mentioned above, could be a later editorial addition. This reduplication has been considered (Bright, Kapelrud)¹⁶³ to be the result of later editing after the completion of the main editorial work. Verse 8 according to Emerton¹⁶⁴ is an editorial gloss caused by the present wording of verse 7. This is because v. 1-7, a passage introducing the main character, concludes naturally with verse 7, giving the date of all these events. Verse 8 therefore seems strange in that it again gives us a date formula that is redundant if the two verses originally followed one another.

The text of Ezra 7:7-8 is as follows¹⁶⁵

- v. 7 "And some of the people of Israel, and some of the priests and Levites, the singers and the gatekeepers, and the temple servants went up to Jerusalem, in the seventh year of Artaxerxes the King,
- v. 8 And he came to Jerusalem in the fifth month, which was in the seventh year of the King"

Kapelrud concludes¹⁶⁶ concerning verse 8, and the connecting phrase הֵיאָה

"We have consequently here a Jewish mode of calculation, instead of the Persian which was used in the previous verses. In order to harmonise the verse with the previous ones, 'this was the seventh year of the king' is added.

¹⁶² 'Who Came First, Ezra or Nehemiah ?' *HUCA* 8

¹⁶³ J. Bright *History of Israel* 402

A. Kapelrud *The Question of Authorship in the Ezra Narrative* 8

¹⁶⁴ J.A. Emerton 'Did Ezra go to Jerusalem in 428 B.C.?' *JTS* 18-19.

¹⁶⁵ Author's translation. It differs from main translations such as the R.S.V. in word order alone, with the list of people coming before the reference to Jerusalem, rather than afterwards as in the RSV.

¹⁶⁶ A. Kapelrud *The Question of Authorship in the Ezra narrative* 8

The very use of hi' to connect it shows that this part has been rather loosely added afterwards."

Mowinckel¹⁶⁷ suggests that a later editor produced this gloss to harmonise v.8 with v.7. Verse 7 is ordered in what Mowinckel considers a Persian time reference structure, while verse 8 is from a later editor, favouring a Hebrew dating structure (month followed by year). The use of the word חִי' therefore introduces an extra phrase that further explains the date of v.7 but this time to a Jewish audience, more used to dating references where the month precedes the year (though actually there is no month mentioned in verse 7).

However, this assumes that the formula - king's name, year, month, in that order - is a regular Persian pattern of date recording, and that the Jewish pattern is to record the month before the year. There are 12 occasions where this specific pattern occurs in the 'Hebrew canon'.¹⁶⁸ However, there are at least 18 occasions¹⁶⁹ where a theorised 'Persian' pattern occurs. All these 'Persian' references occur in contexts that are definitely pre-Persian (often from the hand of the Deuteronomist). Therefore there is no reason to suggest that verse 8 is an Hebraism added onto an older Persian reference.

Kapelrud¹⁷⁰ also suggests that the word חִי' signals the falseness of the phrase, as it is an unnatural linking formation, made necessary due to the later addition of verse 8. However, this word construction is not necessarily false and unnatural, for it is seen elsewhere. Of the references discussed above, two (2 Kings 25:8 and Ezekiel 1:2 - pre-Persian) appear identical to the passage in Ezra 7:8 even to the use of the word חִי' linking the month (and day in the context of 2 Kings) with the year of the King.

Therefore there is no solid textual evidence to suggest later editorial work within the Ezra 7:7-8 reference. However, even if Kapelrud and Mowinckel are correct; the theory only removes the significance of the number 7 in verse 8. There is still the reference to it in verse 7, with no special reason given to assume that the actual numeral is corrupt.

¹⁶⁷ S.Mowinckel *Ezra den Skriftlaerde* 2

¹⁶⁸ Num 1:1, 9:1, 10:11, 2 Ki 25:8, 2 Chr 15:10, Neh 1:1, 2:1, Esther 2:16, Jer 52:12, Ezek 1:2, Haggai 1:15, Zech 1:7.

¹⁶⁹ Gen 7:11, 8:13 Deut 1:3 1 Kings 6:1, 6:38 2 Kings 25:1, 25:27 Jer 28:1, 36:9, Ezekiel 1:1, 24:1, 26:1, 30:20, 31:1, 32:17, 33:21, 40:1

¹⁷⁰A. Kapelrud *The Question of Authorship in the Ezra narrative* 8

Conclusion

1. The reference in Ezra 7 points to the reign of Artaxerxes I from the methods of identifying individuals that were used by Biblical authors. This agrees with the conclusion of sections A and B.
2. The reference in Ezra 7:7-8 points to the seventh year of Artaxerxes. Any alternative reading does not have textual support.
3. There is no indication of any textual inaccuracy, nor of any provable editorial activity that might have altered an original (assumed chronologically correct) reading to the present one, which reads the 'seventh year of Artaxerxes'. Therefore a date of 458 BCE for Ezra's arrival in Jerusalem, before Nehemiah is most likely. Alternatively, a 398 BCE date in the seventh year of Artaxerxes II is the next most possible date. A 428 BCE date looks unlikely from this discussion.

SECTION D

Texts Which Seem To Indicate That Ezra And Nehemiah Were Contemporaries

Moving from the issues relating to the date reference in Ezra 7, there are other indicators that might also help demonstrate the date of Ezra's arrival in Jerusalem. The foremost among these is the issue of contemporaneity, the subject of this section.

1. The Significance Of Contemporaneity

There are several texts that combine the activity of the two reformers. They suggest that the editor considered Ezra to be in Jerusalem at the same time as Nehemiah, and that they both worked together on the restructuring of the new Israel. If these texts are accurate historically, and Ezra and Nehemiah were contemporaneous, then the following conclusions are possible.

i. Ezra cannot have arrived in the reign of Artaxerxes II

Chapter 3 section A has already concluded that Nehemiah came in the reign of Artaxerxes I, and therefore if Ezra and Nehemiah were contemporaries, Ezra also had to have arrived in the reign of the same Artaxerxes.

ii. Ezra cannot have arrived in the 37th year of Artaxerxes I

If the reforms in Ezra and Nehemiah belong to a time before Nehemiah's second mission (Nehemiah 5:14, 13:6) which occurred in 432 BCE, Ezra cannot have arrived in the 37th year of Artaxerxes I. This is because the 37th year is 428 BCE, *after* the date for those reforms. This does not rule out the 27th year, or other variations on that theme, but these alternatives are all less likely, as there is no evidence to suggest such an emendation.

2. The Evidence For Contemporaneity

In this discussion, it is necessary to identify several sections within Ezra-Nehemiah in looking for this evidence.

i. The Ezra Memoirs in Nehemiah 8-10

There are several passages in the book of Nehemiah that mention the names of both reformers, and portray them working together. The references to Ezra found in Nehemiah 8 are considered (e.g. Batten, Williamson)¹⁷¹ to be part of the memoirs of Ezra that have

¹⁷¹L.W.Batten *Ezra and Nehemiah* 352
H.G.M.Williamson *Ezra and Nehemiah* 26

become misplaced. If this is the case, then any reference in these texts to Ezra is understandable, though references to Nehemiah then become a problem.

ii. Editorial Work In The Book Of Nehemiah

Other references fall into an editorial category (e.g. those found in Nehemiah 10), and therefore their existence is due to either editorial confusion or the deliberate policy of the editor. This has already been discussed in chapter 2, and the references were found to reflect the deliberate policy of the editor. He intended the work to portray Ezra and Nehemiah as contemporaries, though whether this was for chronological, or theological reasons, remains uncertain. Chapter two concluded that the interests of both theology and history coincided.

iv. The Nehemiah Memoirs

A final group of references occurs in the 'Nehemiah memoirs' (Nehemiah 12:27-13:3). Here references to Nehemiah are natural, but references to Ezra are difficult to reconcile.

All the texts in these four areas need close examination, to discover if either name is an addition, or whether both names are original in the context.

i. Nehemiah 8:9 (The Ezra Memoir)

This text appears to record the events that took place after Nehemiah rebuilt the walls, when Ezra read the law. Ezra is the central character in the verse (indeed the whole passage). In their present context, chapters 8-10 form the climax of the celebration of the completion of the wall, and the completed return to the promised land. Ezra reading the law, within this context, brings a sense of dedication to the festival. For the people of Yahweh, a reading of the Law was necessary in a rededication ceremony.¹⁷² The role of Ezra within the work Ezra-Nehemiah requires his presence in this narrative for this purpose (see chapter 3 section J for a consideration of the roles of the two reformers). Nehemiah's presence is similarly required for the context is the completion of the walls, which was the culmination of Nehemiah's specific role. The context therefore requires the presence of both reformers in the narrative. If the context of Nehemiah 8:9 is the product of editorial work, placing part of the Ezra memoirs into Nehemiah, then references to the activity of Ezra in the chapter are to be expected. This brings Nehemiah's presence in the passage into question, rather than Ezra's. Discussion will now turn to evidence that might suggest the removal of one of the two reformers.

¹⁷²e.g. Joshua 8:31-32 in a covenant renewal ceremony or Joshua 23:6 in a similar time, or 1 Kings 2:3 in the personal dedication of Solomon recommended by David.

a. The reference to Nehemiah in Nehemiah 8:9

This reference to Nehemiah in this verse could be an addition to the text, for the name of Nehemiah is absent from the parallel passage in 1 Esdras 9:49 (see chapter 4 section A). This proposal is made for example by Coggins.¹⁷³ However, Esdras appears to have its own theological agenda in that it omits Nehemiah from its record altogether. There is also the question over which record was the earlier; the majority of scholars now considering that 1 Esdras is not drawn from an earlier source than Ezra-Nehemiah. Therefore the omission of the name Nehemiah in 1 Esdras 9:49 does not constitute evidence for the omission of the name in the Masoretic text. Gilkey¹⁷⁴ adds

"The Masoretic Text includes Nehemiah in the gathering, but he plays no significant part. The omission of him in 1 Esdras 9:49 is not important since the version which ignores him otherwise, would naturally omit him here. As Ezra and Nehemiah were not contemporaries, the name of Nehemiah must be an addition, possibly inserted by an editor who transposed Chapters 8-9 to their present position, which has thus made the men contemporary."

Clines¹⁷⁵ suggests that the lack of reference to Nehemiah elsewhere in the chapter, means that this reference is an editorial gloss. Clines considers this particularly possible as there are no particular reasons for an intervention by him at this point. However, if there is no reason for his inclusion in the occasion, then one has to wonder why the editor saw fit to include him in the narrative. The purpose of his inclusion here (either historical, or editorial) has to relate to the national nature of the festival. Indeed, Kidner¹⁷⁶ considers his sudden involvement 'characteristic'. It is also difficult to consider an editorial gloss that includes the name Nehemiah in verse 9, then gives him a specific and single task in verse 10, where he dismisses the people. An editorial gloss could explain an additional name, but not the specific function mentioned in verse 10.

b. The Singular Verb With A Plural Subject from Nehemiah 8:9-10

Clines¹⁷⁷ goes on to note that the structure of the Hebrew in Nehemiah 8:9 is unusual, for there is a singular verb linked to a plural subject. This could indicate that an extra subject had been added later. Brockington¹⁷⁸ notes that

"The verb 'said' is singular in Hebrew which would be natural if there were one named subject (Ezra) accompanied by Levites, but it is unnatural with the two names."

¹⁷³R.J.Coggins & M.J.Knibb *The First and Second Books of Esdras* 73-74

¹⁷⁴C.W.Gilkey *The Interpreters Bible* 738

¹⁷⁵D.J.Clines *Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther* 185

¹⁷⁶D.A.Kidner *Ezra and Nehemiah* 107

¹⁷⁷D.J.Clines *Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther* 185

¹⁷⁸L.H.Brockington *Ezra Nehemiah, and Esther* 167

It is indeed normal usage for the verb to agree in number and gender with the subject noun. However, the use of a singular verb with a plural subject is not unknown in Hebrew, though admittedly not normal. Kidner¹⁷⁹ suggests that

"this construction is not only possible but quite normal when the verb (as here) *precedes* a string of subjects."

This use of the third masculine singular does occur frequently, for example Kidner¹⁸⁰ notes that Ezra 8:20 cites David and his officials as the plural subject of a third person singular verb.

Further, removing Nehemiah from the verse does not resolve the grammatical difficulty. This is because the Levites, as well as Ezra, remain the subject of the verse. Therefore though the verse structure is unusual, it does not form a reason for the removal of Nehemiah from the verse, unless the Levites are also later additions.

However, the problem reoccurs again in verse ten, which also starts with the same singular verb (וַיֹּאמֶר). Hebrew syntax requires the verb to begin the sentence, with the subject usually following it. The absence of a subject here points to the verb continuing to use the subject of verse 9. The presence of a waw consecutive at the beginning of the verb also could indicate this. This means that the commands of verse ten are being issued not by one individual alone, but by the corporate group mentioned in verse 9. If that is the case, then the text should be translated as "then they said".

Emerton¹⁸¹ and Williamson¹⁸² consider Ezra alone to be the subject of verse 10 "in the light of the chapter as a whole".

If this is the case, then the singular verb in v.10 referring to Ezra would be taken to imply that the singular verb in v.9 also refers to Ezra. Therefore Nehemiah's place in v.9 is possibly a later editorial addition. However, this does not consider the scribes and the Levites also mentioned as subjects of the verb in v.9. If on the basis of the singular verb in v.10 only Ezra is envisioned, suggesting Nehemiah's removal from v.9, then the same argument should apply also to the scribes and Levites. Yet there is no reason to suggest that a later editor might have been motivated to do that, and so it is not theorised as a later editorial addition.

This argument is therefore inconsistent. Either the singular verb in v.10 determines that all the extra subjects of v.9 are considered 'later editorial additions', or that v.9 and 10 are

¹⁷⁹D.A.Kidner *Ezra and Nehemiah* 149

¹⁸⁰D.A.Kidner *Ezra and Nehemiah* 149

¹⁸¹J.A.Emerton 'Didi Ezra go to Jerusalem in 428 B.C.?' *JTS* 15

¹⁸²H.G.M.Williamson *Ezra, Nehemiah* 279

both a singular verb with the same composite subject. This latter appears to be the more reasonable supposition.

Kidner¹⁸³ on the other hand, considers Nehemiah to be the subject of verse 10 when he says that Nehemiah was

“the one who intervened, supported by his colleagues, and who by implication gave the constructive injunctions of verse 10.”

If this is the case, then the name of Nehemiah has to remain in a text where Ezra is inevitably present from the previous verse. Therefore again there is no evidence to suggest that Nehemiah is a later addition to this verse.

Only Emerton and Williamson's reading of verse 10 supplies evidence for the removal of Nehemiah's name. Therefore there is insufficient reason to discount the evidence of contemporaneity that this text offers. Therefore Ezra and Nehemiah must be considered contemporaries, though their temporal priority cannot be determined from this reference.

ii. Nehemiah 10:1 (Editorial Work Within The Book Of Nehemiah)

Nehemiah heads the list of those who seal the covenant. However, within the context of Nehemiah 8-10, this is a document made in response to Ezra's reading of the Law. Surprisingly, Ezra's name does not appear in the list. However, in the present context, his presence can be inferred. It is before Ezra that the Israelites in Nehemiah 9:38 are making their binding agreement. Perhaps this witness function is the reason for the rather odd omission of Ezra's name from the list of signatories. So we see Nehemiah operative in events specifically tied to Ezra's actions. Again, this text seems to imply that Ezra and Nehemiah had to have been contemporaries.

However, many scholars¹⁸⁴ propose that the passage finds its historical locus after Nehemiah 13, and was part of the misplaced Ezra memoir. Therefore it was Nehemiah who was involved in this work, and so Ezra's presence need not be inferred. The passage then does not discuss the people's reaction to the reforms of Ezra, but to Nehemiah's reform policy of chapter 13.

If this is the case, then the reference cannot suggest non-contemporaneity, though it similarly does not prove contemporaneity.

¹⁸³D.A.Kidner *Ezra and Nehemiah* 149 fn 1

¹⁸⁴D.J.Clines *Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther* 199

L.H.Brockington *Ezra, Nehemiah, and Esther* 177

iv. Nehemiah 12:26,31,36,38,40,47 (Nehemiah Memoirs)

In these verses Ezra and Nehemiah act together at the dedication of the wall, which again indicates that they were contemporaries. Both Ezra and Nehemiah appear together in verse 26; both involved in the public life of Israel. Then in verses 33 and 36 Ezra is active again, leading one of the processions. Finally Nehemiah reappears in verse 47.

Along with these points are the first person references in verses 31,38 and 40 narrating the events. This would appear to refer to Nehemiah also (if this passage is part of the Nehemiah memoirs). The juxtaposition of Ezra and Nehemiah here has again come under scrutiny, with various suggested emendations. Brockington¹⁸⁵ suggests that the reference to Ezra in verse 36 was

"added to Nehemiah's memoirs by the editor, who regarded Ezra and Nehemiah as contemporaries."

I commenting on Nehemiah 12:36 Rowley thinks it¹⁸⁶

"probable that the words 'and of Ezra the Priest and Scribe', which are syntactically irregular, were not found in the Chronicler's source, but were added by him, in accordance with his supposition that Ezra and Nehemiah were contemporaries."

Though no scholar offers textual proof of such editorial changes, there is possible editorial motivation for them. Williamson¹⁸⁷ provides a motive for the addition of Ezra's name when he says that

"the reference to Ezra the scribe in the account of the dedication of the walls is ... necessary to maintain the symmetry of the two processions."

Thus the inclusion of Ezra into the narrative would be for literary reasons. Batten¹⁸⁸ offers a slightly different variation, considering it to be a deliberate editorial ploy by the Chronicler who thought (or who wished his readers to think) that this was the way that the events occurred.

"to support his view, he has introduced Nehemiah in the story of the reading of the law (Ne. 8⁹). He also drags Ezra's name into the story of the dedication of the walls (Ne.12³⁶), but it is a manifest gloss. In spite of the dissimilarity of their work, these two leaders could not be contemporaries."

This issue was discussed in chapter two, along with the possibility that he was confused, and it was concluded that such a hypothesis was unlikely. It is simpler to consider that the literary neatness and editorial purpose are as they appear, because they reflect historical events in which Ezra and Nehemiah were contemporary.

¹⁸⁵L.H. Brockington *Ezra Nehemiah, and Esther* 204

¹⁸⁶H.H. Rowley *Men of God* 232 fn 2

¹⁸⁷H.G.M. Williamson *Ezra, Nehemiah* xliv

¹⁸⁸L.W. Batten *Ezra and Nehemiah* 28

Conversely, Yamauchi¹⁸⁹ considers that neither of the two names can be disassociated from the list. His reason for this statement is that without both Ezra and Nehemiah; one of the processions has no leader. If his theory is correct, then it means that both names are necessary to the text, thus implying that they had to have been contemporaries.

Conclusion

To hold to the hypothesis that the two reformers were not contemporary, a great deal of unproved literary editing has to have taken place to make the texts appear to imply that they were contemporaries. This does not form strong evidence for such a hypothesis.

The alternative possibility, that the two reformers were contemporaries, has three direct passages to support it (Nehemiah 8:9, 10:1, 12:26 ff.). These three passages are each considered to show evidence of textual editing at some later date. However, on examination there is no confirming evidence to suggest that the texts have been altered (the LXX does have some variants, but they are minimal [Nehemiah 8:9 & 10:1] and do not affect the issue here). Therefore the texts that suggest contemporaneity should stand, suggesting strongly that Ezra and Nehemiah were contemporaries.

These three passages (though surprisingly few) do suggest that the two reformers were contemporaries. This means that 398 BCE and 428 BCE therefore appear unlikely, but 458 BCE and 438 BCE both appear possible from this discussion.

Further sections will consider this beginning, and relate other issues to this suggestion of contemporaneity.

¹⁸⁹E.M.Yamauchi *Expositors Bible Commentary* 583

SECTION E

The Identity Of Johanan

The previous section suggested that Ezra and Nehemiah could have been contemporaries. However, it was not possible to decide which reformer came first, as Nehemiah's date of arrival came between two possible dates for Ezra's arrival. The thesis will now examine the people mentioned in the text with both Ezra and Nehemiah. There is only one name that appears in both memoirs with significance for the relative dating of Ezra and Nehemiah, namely Johanan.

There are several references to Johanan in the book (Nehemiah 12:22, and 12:23). Another similar name appears in both Ezra and Nehemiah, which is Jehohanan (Ezra 10:6, 10:28, Nehemiah 12:13, and 12:42). Ezra 10:6 speaks of Jehohanan as being the son of Eliashib, whilst Nehemiah 12:23 also describes Johanan as being the son of Eliashib. On that basis the two names are taken (e.g. Brockington)¹⁹⁰ as equivalent names relating to the same individual.

It should also be noted that a third name Jonathan also occurs in Ezra 8:6 and Nehemiah 12:11, 12:14, 12:35. Batten¹⁹¹ considers that this too is merely a variant reading for Jehohanan. He says regarding Jonathan

"The succession of high Pr. in Ne. 12²² shows that Jehohanan is identical with Jonathan (12¹¹) and that he was the grandson of Eliashib".

(Nehemiah 12:22 refers to Johanan, but Batten assumes that these two names refer to the same person.) Therefore there are grounds for equating both Johanan and Jonathan, with Jehohanan.

1. The Significance of Equating These Three Names

The question of whether these three names refer to the same person is considered further below, but will be assumed for the present. Making that assumption, certain facts can be linked.

1. On the basis of the Elephantine Papyri,¹⁹² the High Priest in 398 BCE was Johanan.
2. Ezra went to the room of Jehohanan son of Eliashib (Ezra 10:6).
3. The High Priest in Nehemiah's day was Eliashib - Nehemiah 3:1. (This is significant because Eliashib had a grandson called Johanan - Nehemiah 12:22.)

¹⁹⁰L.H.Brockington *Ezra, Nehemiah and Esther* 111

¹⁹¹L.H.Batten *Ezra and Nehemiah* 29

¹⁹²A.E.Cowley *Aramaic Papyri* no. 30 108-119

These three facts when linked place Ezra in Jerusalem in 398 BCE at least a generation after Nehemiah. Rowley¹⁹³ considers this to be the strongest argument for the priority of Nehemiah. He takes the reference in 10:6 to mean that the room belonged to the High Priest (c.f. discussion on this topic below) and defends his assumption¹⁹⁴ by noting that

"In the context of the events noted in this chapter Ezra would not be expected to be consorting with subordinate officials and youths, but with the high priest."

Nehemiah 12:22 suggests the same, identifying Johanan as the grandson of Eliashib, and thus of the right generation to be High Priest in 398 BCE. However, reaching this position requires making some assumptions that need further consideration.

2. An Examination Of Ezra 10:6

An assumption of the scenario above, is that Ezra went to the room of Jehohanan in the temple, and that Jehohanan was High Priest. As Johanan was High Priest by 398 BCE, this suggests that Ezra arrived in Jerusalem in the reign of Artaxerxes II. However, this is not the only possible explanation of the Ezra 10:6 reference. Alternative explanations are as follows.

i. Jehohanan had a priest's room in the Temple

The reference in Ezra 10:6 does not mention the High Priest at all. All the text says is that Ezra went to the chamber of Jehohanan the son of Eliashib apparently in the Temple. He is not called High Priest in the text, but is assumed to be so. Brockington¹⁹⁵ suggests that

"Jehohanan is not here called high priest, but it is almost certain that Ezra would go to no one of less rank"

However, Scott¹⁹⁶ disagrees with him, considering that Jehohanan could be younger at the time Ezra meets him.

"We may assume that in 457 Jehohanan was serving in the Temple in some subordinate position, occupying the chamber in virtue of that office, or of his relationship with Eliashib."

Other scholars have argued similarly. From the reference in Ezra 10:6, Scott¹⁹⁷ suggests that it is not at all certain that Jehohanan was High Priest at the time of Ezra's visit. He¹⁹⁸ discusses evidence based on the literary unity of Ezra-Nehemiah when he says

¹⁹³H.H.Rowley *Servant Of the Lord* 135-168

¹⁹⁴H.H.Rowley *Servant Of the Lord* 155

¹⁹⁵L.H. Brockington *Ezra, Nehemiah and Esther* 111

¹⁹⁶W.F.M.Scott 'Nehemiah-Ezra ?' *ET* 265

¹⁹⁷W.M.F.Scott 'Nehemiah-Ezra ?' *ET* 265

¹⁹⁸W.F.M.Scott 'Nehemiah-Ezra ?' *ET* 265

"when Eliashib comes into the story, the Chronicler is always careful to mention that he is the high priest (Neh 3^{1,20} 13^{4,28}). So if Jehohanan had been high priest at the time, he would have written 'I went into the chamber of the high priest', as when he refers to Eliashib's house (Neh 13²⁰) he calls it 'the house of Eliashib the High Priest'."

The lack of such a reference, could imply that Johanan was not High Priest at the time, and so could have been a younger man, at some time before 398 BCE.

Therefore it is possible, that Ezra came to Jerusalem in 428 BCE, and still stayed with Jehohanan, then a junior in the Temple. While this could be reconciled with a date of 428 BCE, dates of 458, or 438 BCE are more difficult to uphold. The earlier the date, the younger Jehohanan has to have been in the records of Josephus and Nehemiah.

As a corollary of this (if Jehohanan was a junior in the Temple in the time of Ezra 10:6), the reference to Jehohanan in Ezra has to be to an earlier time than the reference to Johanan in the Elephantine papyri (dated to 411 BCE). This is because Ezra 10:6 sees Jehohanan as a junior in the Temple, but by the time of the Elephantine papyri he is High Priest. This implies that Ezra visited Jehohanan before 411, by which date Johanan has become High Priest. This favours a 428 BCE date for Ezra's arrival in Jerusalem.

ii. Merely called 'Jehohanan's room'

This point also allows for the possibility that the references discussed above all relate to the same person. Albright¹⁹⁹ considers that the room was simply known as 'Jehohanan's room' at the time of writing of Ezra 10, though Jehohanan was not occupying it at the time of the events recorded in Ezra 10. He comments, referring to an earlier date for Ezra, just after, or concurrent with the second period of Nehemiah's time as governor,

"With it would agree very well the reference (Ezra 10:6) to the 'chamber of Johanan son of Eliashib' who was High Priest when the first edition of the Chronicler was finished (Neh. 12:23) since Eliashib was still High Priest at the return of Nehemiah to the court in 432 (Neh. 13:4 ff.), whereas Johanan had apparently been High Priest for some time in 411 BC., to judge from the Elephantine correspondence".

If this hypothesis is correct, then Ezra has to have visited Jehohanan in Ezra 10:6 before Johanan became High Priest (411 BCE according to the Elephantine papyri).²⁰⁰ This then points to a date of 458 or 428 BCE.

iii. Was this room *in* the Temple?

Ezra 10:6 mentions Ezra going to the house of Jehohanan from (מִלְפָּנֵי) the temple. This could mean that Jehohanan was a citizen of Jerusalem, and say nothing at all about the

¹⁹⁹W.F. Albright *The Biblical Period From Abraham to Ezra* 113

²⁰⁰A.E. Cowley *Aramaic Papyri* papyrus 30 108-119

significance of his room. Such a possibility seriously undermines Brockington's identification of all the references as relating to one person.

The word relating to Ezra's departing the Temple is prefaced with the preposition מִן expressing the idea of *separation* out of, or from. Hence from this compound preposition, it appears more likely that Ezra had left the Temple confines in going to this room. Additionally, the word לִפְנֵי is used meaning 'before', carrying the sense of 'the presence/face of'. BDB²⁰¹ suggests

"At the face or front of, the most general word for in the presence of, before"

The significance of this is that it adds to the idea that Ezra was leaving the presence of the Temple in going to this other room.

However, against this possibility, the word used for 'room' לְשֹׁכָה signifies particularly a temple room²⁰². However, that is not the only usage of the word. 1 Samuel 9:22 uses it of a room associated with a high place, where Samuel ate with Saul. Jeremiah 36:12 uses it of a secretary's room in the royal palace. The word while not necessarily a temple room, evidently has to have association with the dwelling of God, (the Temple) or of his servant (Samuel, or the King - his scribe in this case). The Samuel reference, referring to a time before the Temple is not relevant. However, the Jeremiah reference does suggest that the word does not only relate to Temple rooms, though it does certainly relate to official quarters. The word Temple itself הֵיכָל also carries with it a similar dichotomy. It can carry either religious connotations, meaning 'temple', or royal ones, where it can mean 'palace'²⁰³. Therefore, though the word here is more likely to refer to a temple room, it is not inevitably the case. It is also possible that Jehohanan had official rooms within the government which Ezra attended. This would then portray him not as a priest, but as possibly a government official.

There is no suggestion therefore that Jehohanan has to have been a priest in view of the reference to his room, because there is no certainty that Jehohanan's room was in the Temple. However, that is a big suggestion to make on the basis of one preposition, and the sole use of the noun to refer to a room other than in the Temple. It remains a doubt in the mind, rather than a significant point.

²⁰¹BDB 816

²⁰²BDB 545

²⁰³BDB 228

Summary

The reference to Jehohanan the High Priest in Ezra 10:6 is merely contingent on the existence and identification of this room. The room may not have been the High Priest's, or it may only have been designated Jehohanan's room when Ezra visited it. It may not even have been in the Temple at all. Therefore this section does not have any real significance for the issues being considered.

3. Could The High Priest Have Been A Murderer?

Another consideration here is the reference Josephus makes to the character of the Johanan. In Josephus²⁰⁴ reference, Johanan was responsible for killing his brother in the Temple. It was a shocking act, which brought severe reprisals from the Persian governor. Josephus²⁰⁵ dates this event before 398 BCE. This would mean that had Ezra arrived in Jerusalem in 398; he would have been consorting with a known murderer by staying in Jehohanan's room. This presents a serious problem, as it is unlikely that Ezra would have demonstrated public acceptance of Johanan by staying in his room, if Jehohanan were guilty of fratricide.

Therefore if the Jehohanan of Ezra 10:6 is to be identified with the Johanan of Josephus, then the event of Ezra 10:6 must have occurred before 398 BCE. The date of 428 therefore appears most likely in this scenario (assuming the identification suggested above) as Jehohanan would have been too young to have the honour of meeting Ezra in 458 BCE.

However scholars like Grabbe and Williamson²⁰⁶ raise considerable uncertainty over the historical placing of this reference. Chapter 4 section B considers the possibility that the event Josephus narrates may have related to a time in the reign of Artaxerxes III. Therefore no conclusions can be drawn from Josephus' reference.

4. Are the three names referring to the same person?

Thus far, it has been assumed that the three names refer to the same person. However, this may not be the case. The following references all pose difficulties:

1. Ezra 10:6 - Jehohanan son of Eliashib - with a Temple room.
2. Nehemiah 12:11 - Son of Joiada - called Jonathan
3. Nehemiah 12:22 - Johanan after Joiada but before Jaddua, and second in descent from Eliashib.
4. Nehemiah 12:23 - Johanan the son of Eliashib

²⁰⁴ Josephus 'Antiquities of the Jews' Works X1 V11.1

²⁰⁵ Josephus 'Antiquities of the Jews' Works X1 V11.1

²⁰⁶ L.L. Grabbe *Judaism From Cyrus to Hadrian*

H.G.M. Williamson 'The Historical Value of Josephus' Jewish Antiquities' *JTS* 49-66

5. Elephantine Papyrus - Johanan High Priest (411-410 date of Papyri)
6. Josephus - Johanan who killed his brother in the Temple.

Four discussion points arise from these references.

i. Patronymics

There are references within Ezra-Nehemiah to Jehohanan and Jonathan, that are clearly not to be identified with the individual considered in this passage. Ezra 10:6 refers to Jehohanan the son of Eliashib, whereas Ezra 10:15 refers to Jonathan the son of Asahel. Further, Johanan of Nehemiah 12:23 is the son (or grandson) of Eliashib. Nehemiah 6:18 speaks of another Johanan the son of Shechaniah. Scott²⁰⁷ also made this point, noting that the name Johanan/Jehohanan was used of 15 people in the Chroniclers writings, as well as 5 in Maccabees, and 17 in Josephus. These names were therefore apparently fairly common, and so to assume that a given name always relates to the same person 'unless some other identifier such as a patronymic is given), is dangerous. The equating of all these names and references is uncertain at best, especially because the references listed above do not contain an identifying patronymic, or other device.

ii. Son or Grandson?

The names of Johanan and Jehohanan do not always bear the same relationship to each other. Ezra 10:6 makes Jehohanan Eliashib's son, but Nehemiah 12:22 makes Johanan grandson. Based on the wide meaning of the word בן Brockington²⁰⁸ sees no difficulty here, and suggests that Jehohanan was Eliashib's grandson. The NEB supports this when it translates Ezra 10:6 as 'grandson' instead of 'son'.

Porter²⁰⁹ has made a detailed study of the usage of the Hebrew word for son or grandson. His conclusion is guarded but does say regarding Ezra 10:6 that

"it is invalid to claim that 'son' in this verse has the meaning of 'grandson', if that claim rests on an alleged regular Hebrew idiom."

Saley²¹⁰ considers that Johanan could have been Eliashib's son, Joiada's brother, and that the usage of the Hebrew word בן is well attested in this sense in the Elephantine papyri

It is therefore unsafe to read into Ezra 10:6 the assumption that Jehohanan is Eliashib's grandson. While such a reading is possible, it is not definite, and a degree of uncertainty must remain. Again therefore, we are not certain that the references refer to the same person.

²⁰⁷W.M.F.Scott 'Nehemiah-Ezra ?' *ET* 265

²⁰⁸L.H. Brockington *Ezra, Nehemiah and Esther* 111

²⁰⁹J.R. Porter 'Son or Grandson (Ezra X.6)?' *JTS* 67

²¹⁰R.J.Saley 'The Date of Nehemiah reconsidered' *Essays* 159

iii. Papponymy

It is possible that several generations of one family are being confused by the reader, as the practice of papponymy (calling a child after a grandfather) was widespread at the time. Yamauchi²¹¹ comments

"The Samaria Papyri indicate that the name Sanballat alternated over six generations."

The Elephantine Papyrus no.25 in Cowley's collection mentions a lady called Mibtahiah who had a son, a nephew, a brother, and a grandfather all called Yedoniah.

If the various references to the Johanans discussed above relate to different people, Cross²¹² has attempted to rationalise them all into a list that fits all the references in the text. Cross, filling in all the gaps in the High Priestly list of Nehemiah 12:22, has produced a reconstruction of the list with relation to Ezra's date. He does this by assuming that a pair of similar names has fallen out of sources extant today. He then produces a new dated list of High Priests.

<u>Birth</u>	
Jeshua	570
Joiakim ²¹³	545
Eliashib I	540
Johanan I	520
Eliashib II	495
Joiada	470
Johanan II	445
Jaddua I	420
Johanan III	395
Jaddua II	370

By this reconstruction, Cross resolves all the crucial differences between the references that were noted above.

1. Ezra remains a contemporary of Johanan I son of Eliashib I
2. The Jaddua mentioned by Nehemiah would therefore have been the Grandfather of Jaddua II the High Priest in the time of Alexander The Great.
3. It resolves the son or grandson issue, while fitting all the known references to Johanan- Jehohanan, and requires no changes in any extant records.

²¹¹E.M.Yamauchi 'The Reverse Order Of Ezra-Nehemiah Reconsidered' *Themelios* 9

²¹²F.M.Cross 'A Reconstruction of the Judean Restoration' *JBL* 17

²¹³G. Widengren *The Persian Period* 508. Widengren notes a difficulty with this entry. In Cross's reconstruction, every High Priest is the son of the proceeding, except for Eliashib I, who is listed as brother of Joiakim. Nehemiah 12:10 lists Eliashib as Joiakim's son, not his brother. This reconstruction requires a further hypothesis of papponymy to resolve.

4. It also removes the need to assume very long periods in office for some of the High Priests, especially Joiakim (an implicit unstated requirement underlying his work).

Cross²¹⁴ suggests that 24.5 years is close to what we would expect for a normal period in office. However, in a list based on extant records, the time in office would be 34.3 years on average. This was a foundational difficulty that instigated Cross' hypothesis.

While the above is a neat reconstruction, Widengren²¹⁵ disagrees because it resorts to assuming two unproved cases of papponymy, causing a reduplication of the names in the list. This then allowed a scribal error to accidentally omit the similar names. The reconstruction has no textual support for either case of assumed papponymy, and Vanderkam²¹⁶ fails to see any evidence of such papponymy that might have caused so many similar names to occur. He suggests²¹⁷ that Cross's view should be

"Rejected for lack of compelling evidence."

Further more, because of the need to assume the existence of missing names from the High Priestly list, Vanderkam²¹⁸ concludes that

"It is likely that the extant list of high priests for the Persian period is complete"

Cross' suggestion (while attempting to resolve difficulties over this lack of knowledge) merely reconstructs the events on new unproved and unsupported assumptions. Along with Williamson²¹⁹ it seems more reasonable to conclude that the list of High Priests is possibly incomplete, and at present unknowable. Speculation of this sort is unprofitable. Uncertainty remains therefore over the office of High Priest, and the identity of the Jehohanan of Ezra 10:6.

Summary

- a. The 3 variant names have to be understood as either accepted variant spellings of the single name, or scribal errors.
- b. The issue 'Son or Grandson' needs to be settled if the references are to be harmonised as referring to a single person.
- c. The office of the people in the references also needs consideration.
- d. Proof is needed that these men were all the same person, rather than assuming it, for there are no fathers' names given in any of the formulae that are used throughout.

²¹⁴F.M.Cross 'A Reconstruction of the Judean Restoration' *JBL* 9

²¹⁵G. Widengren *The Persian Period* 506-509

²¹⁶J.C.Vanderkam 'Priesthood and Cult in Ancient Israel' *JSOT supplement* 78

²¹⁷J.C.Vanderkam 'Priesthood and Cult in Ancient Israel' *JSOT supplement* 89

²¹⁸J.C.Vanderkam 'Priesthood and Cult in Ancient Israel' *JSOT supplement* 91

²¹⁹H.G.M.Williamson *Ezra, Nehemiah* 154

Therefore a simple linking of these references to produce a reconstruction of the life of a single individual contains some difficulty. While the references do display similarities, there are also differences within the same references that are not easily resolved. There is no certainty therefore that these references do relate to the same person. Indeed, Josephus' reference to Ιωάννης is now thought by some²²⁰ to most probably relate to a fourth century person.

Conclusions

There are several questions unresolved. Each requires different assumptions, and each leads to a multiplicity of scenarios. There has been much to suggest caution, towards not making a correlation among the references without corroborating evidence such as a patronymic. Conclusions therefore can only be tentative, but there are several that can be suggested.

The case for the references all pointing to the same figure is weak. Without further evidence, the clearest course is *not* to assume that the Jehohanan of Ezra 10:6 is connected to the Johanan or Jonathan of the other references. Further, it is not certain that the references to Eliashib refer to the same person. Finally there is considerable doubt that Ezra visited Johanan the High Priest of Josephus' account. If these uncertainties are accepted, then there are no implications at all as to the date of Ezra's arrival in Jerusalem, from this issue.

2. If all the references relate to the same person, then they suggest that Ezra did not come to Jerusalem in 398 BCE. A 428 BCE date before Jehohanan's fratricide looks more likely, especially if the Jehohanan of Ezra 10:6 and the Johanan of Josephus are identified as being the same person.

Overall however, no conclusions as to Ezra's date of arrival can be drawn

²²⁰ H.G.M. Williamson 'The Historical Value of Josephus' *JTS* 49-66
R.J. Saley 'The date of Nehemiah Reconsidered' *Essays* 160

SECTION F

The List Of Names Common To Both Reformers

The previous section considered Johanan a significant individual in both Ezra and Nehemiah. However, there are also other individuals mentioned in the books of Ezra and Nehemiah (more incidental to the story line) worthy of consideration in dating the ministries of Ezra and Nehemiah.

To be able to identify a name mentioned in both books as being the same person, with any degree of certainty, the name has to provide some means of identification, (e.g. by naming the father, or the person's duty). Otherwise, the correspondence of names might mean nothing other than the occurrence of a popular name. Ezra 8 mentions a large number of returning exiles. Out of them all, only 24 incidental characters are named. Comparing Ezra's list of few names, with Nehemiah's equally limited references in Nehemiah (mainly Ch 3 and 10), it is statistically unlikely that the same people would be named in each list (as incidental characters), even if the two reformers were working contemporaneously. However the problem is more acute than this, because the available data are further restricted by requiring the same identifying piece of information about the person in each reference. The number of names that have the father's name or occupation added in either list is small, so it is statistically very unlikely that both lists would have the same name with the same identifier.

Statistically speaking then, the lack of many identifiable contemporaries within the books of Ezra and Nehemiah is not significant, and does not therefore suggest that Ezra and Nehemiah were not contemporaries. Nevertheless attention will now be given to this small number of names that can be identified as referring to the same individual occurring in both books. Any significance that they might have for the relative dating of Ezra and Nehemiah will be considered.

1. Meremoth

The name occurs in both Ezra 8:33 and Nehemiah 3:4,21. In these references Meremoth is called the son of Uriah. Despite this patronymic, Kellermann²²¹ theorises two people of that name, but the given patronymic suggests otherwise. However, some criterion has to be established to make headway in researching, and cross referencing records. Therefore unless there are particular indications to the contrary, the existence of an extra identifier

²²¹U.Kellermann 'Erwägungen zum Problem der Esradatierung' ZAW 69

will be taken in this thesis as sufficient evidence to consider both references relate to the same person.

As Meremoth appears to be a contemporary of both reformers, it could be possible to determine which reformer he worked alongside first. The discussion therefore hinges around several points discussed below.

i/ The Priest

In Ezra 8:33, Meremoth is called 'the priest' whereas, in Nehemiah 3:4,21 he is not so designated; only the patronymic is given. This suggests that Ezra came after Nehemiah, when Meremoth was possibly more mature, had managed to prove his ancestry, and so had attained the standing of priest he apparently lacked in Nehemiah's day. However, Nehemiah 3:4,21 does not prove Meremoth's absence of status as priest, for Nehemiah's list does not discuss the status of most of the people mentioned. It is true that the Nehemiah list does identify the occupation of certain groups. Verse 17 mentions a group of Levites specifically, and in v.22 a group of priests is mentioned. However, of the individuals, very few have any professional affiliation mentioned. Verse 8 mentions Uzziel the goldsmith, and there are several references to leaders of areas, but nothing further.

On this basis, to extrapolate from the Nehemiah reference that Meremoth was not a priest appears to be arguing from silence. Indeed, the opposite inference could be drawn from the following:

- a. That Meremoth is seen working on the house of the High Priest Eliashib in verse 21. This could indicate his priestly position.
- b. The juxtapositioning of the reference to Meremoth in v.21 with a group of priests in v.22 may link Meremoth with that office.

Therefore it is unsafe to draw the inference that Ezra came after Nehemiah based on Meremoth's occupation.

ii/ The Wall building

Verses in Nehemiah 3 (Nehemiah 3:4,21) suggest that Meremoth was younger in Nehemiah 3 than he was in the time of Ezra, because of the double portion of wall building that Meremoth organised. Ezra 8:33 on the other hand, could portray an older, more mature man, given a post of responsibility as treasurer for Ezra. The suggestion therefore is that Nehemiah worked alongside a young energetic Meremoth, while Ezra in 398 BCE 47 years later employed the older more mature Meremoth. Brockington²²² comments that

²²²L.H.Brockington *Ezra Nehemiah and Esther* 135

"Meremoth, who in his youthful zeal had repaired two sections of a wall, would be a suitable person in old age to appoint as treasurer."

However, the references in Nehemiah and Ezra may also be interpreted in a different way equally well. Meremoth could have been responsible for the oversight of two wall-building teams, implying great honour and maturity. Indeed, to interpret the double wall building reference to mean that Meremoth was young and fit, would make assumptions that he was either almost uniquely fit. There were few that could manage two portions of wall building. Such assumptions are unreasonable and unnecessary. All that was required of a leader of one of these wall-building parties, was that he was responsible, and able to motivate. He was not required to build the whole section himself. Then the reference in Ezra to Meremoth the mature well-respected leader, fits well with Nehemiah's image of Meremoth.

Therefore the references to Meremoth cannot demonstrate whether he met Ezra or Nehemiah first. There is however significance in that both reformers mention him. It forms evidence that Ezra and Nehemiah worked in Jerusalem, within the lifetime of one man - Meremoth. This suggests that the 398 BCE date for Ezra is unlikely. There is no indication here however, whether Ezra came before, or after Nehemiah, in 458 or 428 BCE.

2. Malchijah son of Harim

The name occurs in both Nehemiah 3:11, and Ezra 10:31. However, the patronymic 'son of Harim' that both references mention, could refer to members of a large tribe or family group (Nehemiah 7:35,42 mention 320 children of Harim, and 1017 children of Harim respectively). This presumably does not refer to the direct father. This example therefore does not qualify under the rules of identification set out above, but forms a much looser identification. The identification of these references is also uncertain as the books mention other individuals named Malchijah (Ezra 10:25, Nehemiah 3:14) having a different patronymic. This implies that it was a common name, which in turn means that it is possible that there were several Malchijahs among the sons of Harim.

3. Hashabiah and Sherebiah

These names occur together in Ezra 8:18-19, as Levites accompanying Ezra. The names occur together again in Nehemiah 10:9, 11-12; where again as Levites they signed the covenant. They therefore share in the same office in the different references. This, while not such strong evidence as the patronymic, suggests possible correspondence in both references, especially as the two names are

- i. linked to passages concerned with Ezra's activity
- ii. operating in the capacity as Levites
- iii. linked together in each reference, thus forming a pair of names less likely to occur a second time by coincidence than an individual name would be.

The occurrence of the two names therefore forms evidence against the 398 BCE date for Ezra's arrival in Jerusalem because the two figures mentioned were leaders in the days of both Ezra and Nehemiah. It would not have been possible for them to have survived in leadership from 445 (in the time of Nehemiah), to leadership in 398 BCE. However, dates of 458 or 428 BCE remain equally possible.

4. Meshullam

Ezra 8:16 mentions Meshullam, who may be the same person as the Meshullam mentioned in Nehemiah 3:4,30. Ezra's account does not mention a father, so it does not qualify under the strictures placed upon the evidence, but the references do have a significant similarity. This is because both Ezra and Nehemiah refer to Meshullam specifically as a leader. This is not sufficient to identify the two names definitively but may lend weight to the thesis that the two reformers were near in time, as indicated by the previous references.

Conclusion

- i. The suggestion that there are too few identifiable names for Ezra and Nehemiah to be contemporary, carries no weight. The statistical sample of names is simply too small to draw any conclusions from the data.
- ii. There are several names that do appear with sufficient identifiers to indicate their contemporaneity with both Ezra and Nehemiah. Overall, these individuals make the date of 398 BCE for Ezra's arrival very difficult to uphold. This leaves the dates of 458 or 428 BCE as the most likely dates. Unfortunately though, the references to these individuals are not specific enough to be able to determine which reformer met them first.

SECTION G

A Lack Of Combined Activity Between The Two Reformers

The previous sections have examined the possibility that Ezra and Nehemiah were contemporaries, based on the people mentioned in each record. This section will consider the same issue in relation to their activities.

1. Lack Of Combined Activity

Ezra and Nehemiah both came to Jerusalem to help re-establish Judaism in Judah. However, according to their memoirs, they show very little evidence of working with each other to this end. This lack of combined activity²²³ between Ezra and Nehemiah, suggests that they were not contemporaries. Clines²²⁴ considers this difficulty "insoluble".

Nehemiah's lack of a reference to Ezra's reforms is difficult to understand if Ezra came a few years before Nehemiah's arrival. This suggests that Ezra did not work in Jerusalem before Nehemiah. However, this argument is true in the inverse also, for if Nehemiah came before Ezra, then it is also odd that there is no reference to Nehemiah in the work of Ezra. Equally if they were contemporaries, there should be mention of each other's reform. The only case that explains this silence, is where Ezra arrives in the reign of Artaxerxes II, some 50 years after Nehemiah, and therefore with no particular reason to mention him. However, there are other considerations to be noted here.

2. Possible Reconstructions

i. Ezra arrived in 458 BCE

If Ezra did arrive in 458 BCE, and the passage Nehemiah 8-10 belongs in Nehemiah, then there is no reason to expect any reference to Nehemiah within the book of Ezra. This is because all the events recorded therein occurring before Nehemiah's arrival in Jerusalem. The opening two chapters of Nehemiah occur relate to Nehemiah's work in Persia. Chapters 3-6 detail building work and opposition. Here the absence of the name of Ezra is indeed surprising. Chapter 7 is another list parallel to Ezra 2. Chapters 8-10 do see Ezra and Nehemiah apparently operating contemporaneously. Chapters 11-12 are political, dealing with the settling of the populace. Chapter 13 occurs after some undetermined time lapse (verse 6), where Nehemiah is making reforms that match Ezra's own. However, by this time it is quite reasonable to expect Ezra's non-involvement, and even possible death.

²²³assuming that the texts showing combined activity are not accurately recorded or ordered.

²²⁴D.J.Clines *Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther* 16

The date has now to be 'some time later' than 433 BCE the 32nd year of Artaxerxes (Nehemiah 13:6), more than 25 years after Ezra's arrival in Jerusalem in 458.

This reconstruction suggests that references to Ezra should be found in the passage Nehemiah 4-6, which are missing. This is a very small part of the work, which in itself deals with political issues, rather than religious reform. To deduce from such a limited passage that Ezra and Nehemiah cannot have been contemporaneous, because Ezra's name is missing, is unreasonable.

ii. Ezra arrived in 438 BCE

In this reconstruction, there is no reason to suggest Ezra's presence in Nehemiah 1-7 at all. Nehemiah 8-10 involves Ezra in his first arrival in Jerusalem, and causes no difficulty. Nehemiah 11-12, being chiefly political are not relevant to Ezra, and no mention of him would reasonably be expected there. Nehemiah 13 however, would be a passage where mention of Ezra is required, focusing on reforms as it does. Ezra therefore has to have left Jerusalem before Nehemiah's return. This makes the time gap between Ezra's reforms (particularly mixed marriages - see chapter 3 section I) and Nehemiah's particularly, and problematically short. Finally, Ezra 7-10 would be expected to include mention of Nehemiah, particularly as governor of Judah, to whom Ezra's letters of authority would be addressed (see chapter 4 section G).

The lack of reference is more difficult to explain in this reconstruction, than the previous one, and therefore the reconstruction is less likely.

iii. Ezra arrived in 428 / 398 BCE

This reconstruction entirely isolates the ministries of Ezra and Nehemiah, and requires the passage in Nehemiah 8-10 to be moved to the Ezra memoir, removing Nehemiah's involvement entirely. In this case, neither memoir can be expected to mention the work of the other reformer, save possibly by way of setting a precedent. Ezra might have wanted to refer to Nehemiah's earlier marriage reforms as justification for his harsher measures (chapter 3 section I). However, this reconstruction suffers from the actual presence of references implying contemporaneity in Nehemiah 8-10. In the present arrangement of the text, Nehemiah *did* report on Ezra's work, and there are texts referring to joint activity. Indeed, the texts covering their joint activity are exactly the sort of evidence to be expected if the two were contemporaries, with their mandates, and recording their activities. The texts show Ezra working alongside Nehemiah in the area where both interests coincide, but not at any other time. These texts have been considered in chapter 3 section D, and no evidence of textual corruption has been found. Therefore it is possible to suggest that they indicate contemporary activity with Ezra coming slightly before

Nehemiah, for Ezra appears in Nehemiah's memoirs,²²⁵ while Nehemiah does not appear in Ezra's.²²⁶

The above reconstructions show that the 428 BCE date is the least likely. If the passage Nehemiah 8-10 is to be moved into the Ezra memoirs, then 428/398 are the two most likely dates. Otherwise, 458 BCE is the most likely date. The solution to this is therefore contingent on a resolution of the Nehemiah 8-10 difficulty. No conclusions can at present be drawn.

3. Literary Considerations

Moving on in the debate, the likelihood of either reformer mentioning the other has also to be considered. While it is assumed that this is required of contemporaries, that assumption needs to be considered.

Nehemiah had his own work to report on, and his own concerns. The activities of others were only relevant to his memoirs in so far as they touched upon his mission. To expect cross-references within the work is to view the work in a very modern light, seeing it as a report, covering a detailed history of the period. However the biblical material under review here is historiography, rather than a modern historical reference work. Other sources within the Hebrew canon follow a similar pattern, which will be discussed below.

Further, the books of Ezra and Nehemiah have their own rationales that do not necessarily coincide. Therefore lack of links between the two memoirs is not necessarily a significant pointer to the relative dates of Ezra or Nehemiah, nor their contemporaneity.

4. The example of other paired reformers

There are acknowledged instances in the Bible where two men of the same office are known to have co-existed. They were doing the same work, but without reference to each other at all (e.g. Jeremiah and Ezekiel, or Haggai and Zechariah). Eskenazi²²⁷ mentions several examples as a possible parallel to this situation.

"One sees a similar pairing in the story of Zerubbabel and Jeshua, who are more consistently balanced in Ezra-Nehemiah than 1 Esdras. One sees this also in the linking of Haggai and Zechariah. This last pair has become so entrenched in the tradition as a *pair* that one forgets that Haggai and Zechariah themselves never acknowledge each others activities in the prophetic books which bear their names".

²²⁵assuming Nehemiah 8-10 is part of the Nehemiah memoirs - in its present location

²²⁶assuming Nehemiah 8-10 is part of the Nehemiah memoirs - in its present location

²²⁷T.C.Eskenazi *In An Age Of Prose* 153

So considering these examples of the way that the Bible records events, it would not be at all surprising to find no cross references, even were they living, and working in the same city at the same time.

Conclusion

It is natural to expect a large degree of collusion between Ezra and Nehemiah, if their accounts are to be considered contemporaneous, but as Kidner²²⁸ concludes,

"to demand it as a condition of believing that they were contemporaries is unreasonable",

This is especially true considering the way that known contemporaries were recorded in Hebrew literature. Therefore it is unsafe to conclude that Ezra and Nehemiah were not contemporaries, on the basis that neither mentions the other.

²²⁸D. Kidner *Ezra And Nehemiah* 148

SECTION H

The Apparent 13 Year Gap In The Completion Of Ezra's Mission.

Bright²²⁹ suggests that Ezra came to Jerusalem to introduce the Law. If Ezra began his work in Jerusalem in 458 BCE, then there appears to be a gap of 13 years before Ezra publicly read it. This is because the reading of the Law is recorded as being in the 20th year of Artaxerxes in 445 BCE (Nehemiah Ch 8).²³⁰ This apparent gap of 13 years between Ezra's arrival, and public ministry seems unlikely, and therefore renders the 458 BCE date unlikely. Blenkinsopp²³¹ comments

"It is more likely that Ezra discharged his task with respect to the law shortly after his arrival, rather than waiting twelve years to do so."

This leaves the date of 428/438 BCE as the most likely. A date of 398 BCE is very problematic, as the reading of the Law in apparently 445 BCE could not have been made by an Ezra of 398 BCE.

However, to arrive at such a conclusion, two assumptions have to be made:

- i. The Nehemiah 8 passage cannot be moved. Its context in Nehemiah implies the gap of 13 years, and moving it out of this context removes the time reference. If the passage was to be moved, there would be no 13 year gap.
- ii. Ezra did not teach the law to the people before its public reading in Nehemiah 8. While there is no record of him doing so, the assumption that this means Ezra did not, is arguing from silence.

1. Moving Nehemiah 8

The proposed move is much debated, and the resolution of that issue would be of great assistance in dating the two reformers. Until the passage is located with certainty into its context, the existence of a thirteen year gap remains uncertain. It is treated as a variable within this thesis.

2. Ezra read the Law for the first time in Nehemiah 8

There is no real reason to assume from the text that for the thirteen years referred to Ezra was silent. The reference in Nehemiah 8 to Ezra's reading of the law is merely the first recorded occasion. Nehemiah 8 only records a solemn reading of the law in a public meeting on the occasion of the Feast of Tabernacles. It not at all implies that Ezra had not

²²⁹J. Bright *History Of Israel* 394

²³⁰assuming Neh 8 fits in that context rather than in the book of Ezra

²³¹J. Blenkinsopp *Ezra-Nehemiah* 45

been teaching the law to smaller groups of disciples and Levites during the preceding twelve years. Cowley²³² observes that

"It was Ezra who made modern Judaism, by instituting (or re-instituting) the ceremonial Law, and formulating regulations for the national festivals. This implies that he certainly did more than the book of Ezra records. It is surely likely that at least some of this work was done during the 13 year period of silence. The books of Ezra and Nehemiah show the lack of these actions that tradition imputes to him."

Cowley therefore suggests that Ezra completed his mission, not by a single event, such as the reading of the Law in Nehemiah 8, but over a period of time. Indeed, rooting the law into the hearts of the people to such an extent as to shape the future of post-exilic Judaism, took more than one emotional occasion such as Nehemiah 8.

However, Nehemiah 8:14 suggests that what was read was being discovered for the first time by the nation, when it says "They found written in the Law" (Deuteronomy 16:12-15, Leviticus 23:32 ff.), particularly because they then went on to obey the injunction they had discovered. It is unlikely that Ezra over the past 13 years had not found an opportunity to celebrate the feast of booths (the law referred to in the verse) with the nation. Yet considering this in the context of the following verses, the people are obviously celebrating this festival in a particularly appropriate way. Verse 17 mentions that it had not been celebrated like this since the days of Joshua. Assuming verse 17 to be relating to pre-monarchic Israel, it is impossible to suggest that Ezra is reviving a ceremony that has not been practised throughout all the monarchic period. The reference to it not being celebrated 'like this' therefore has to relate to a qualitative, not quantitative statement. "There has not been a meeting like this one" is a statement that can relate to the atmosphere of this year's annual meeting being better than all before them. It does not necessarily mean that this meeting is the first of its kind. Williamson²³³ suggests that

"It is not unusual for individuals or a whole congregation to be struck in a fresh way by the seriousness of God's demand and their shortfall in meeting it. This is all the more likely to have been so on this occasion because of the explanation (and, no doubt, application) which was provided."

It is therefore possible to take the reference to the feast of booths in the context of the high emotions, and feeling of the presence of God, that ran through the entire occasion. The reference then relates to a level of emotion, rather than to a lack of historical predecessors. Kidner²³⁴ considers that the new element to this celebration is the idea of camping out in booths. He says that

²³²A.E.Cowley *Aramaic Papyri* 62

²³³H.G.M.Williamson *Ezra, Nehemiah* 291

²³⁴D.Kidner *Ezra and Nehemiah* 108

"Custom, as happens so often in religious history, had overlaid and modified 'the faith once delivered to the saints', so that the freshly studied Scripture, like a cleaned painting, now revealed some long-forgotten colours."

Clines²³⁵ considers another possibility, that the new element in this reading is the full backing and weight of the Persian government to the reading of the Law. With so many different possible reasons for the enthusiastic reaction of the people, there are no grounds to suggest that the reference in Nehemiah 8:14 indicates that the Law Ezra read out in Nehemiah 8 was heard there for the first time.

Conclusion

The beginning of the section outlined two necessary initial assumptions

- i. The Nehemiah 8 passage cannot be moved
- ii. Ezra did not teach the law to the people before its public reading in Nehemiah 8.

If both of these assumptions are accepted as valid, then the text seems to suggest that the event in Nehemiah 8 was the first reading of the law, in 445 BCE. It is then fair to date Ezra close to 445 BCE (possibly 438 BCE). This points to a date for Ezra's arrival soon after the arrival of Nehemiah, and contemporary with his activity.

However, neither assumption is certain, and there are indications that Ezra was active before Nehemiah 8 (in his prayer of Ezra 9). The apparent silence may therefore simply reflect the silence of the sources as to Ezra's activities. Therefore the arrival of Ezra in 438 BCE is the most probable reconstruction here, following the two assumptions above. However, a discounting of the first assumption leads to either a 458 or 398 BCE being possible.

If only the second assumption is discounted, only a 458, or 438 BCE date is acceptable, for here the two reformers have to be contemporaries.

²³⁵D.J. Clines *Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther* 182

SECTION I

Nehemiah's Reforms Are Unnecessary If Ezra Preceded Him

Within the book Ezra-Nehemiah, both reformers are seen as active in religious reform over the same issues.²³⁶ This suggests that the two reformers worked independently separated by time, and that therefore they could not have been contemporaries. The reforms of the two leaders need consideration, to draw out the order in which the reforms took place.

Two specific examples of reform have been considered historically, and therefore are examined below. The first relates to the key reforms made in response to the intermarriage problem in Ezra Ch 10 and Nehemiah Ch 10 and 13. The second example is that of the financial reform and appointment of treasurers.

1. The Issue Of Mixed Marriages

The Ezra memoirs (Ch. 9-10) record Ezra's reforms of the marital practices of Israel. Within the Nehemiah memoirs (Ch. 13:23) the same problem also appears. Both reformers are therefore forced to deal with the same issue.

This suggests that the two reformers were separated by a considerable time span. Grabbe²³⁷ suggests that

“It is difficult to believe that both Ezra and Nehemiah dealt with the same problem, mixed marriages, if both were in Jerusalem at the same time. This seems to rule out Bright's dating. It would also seem to refute the traditional dating which puts Ezra and Nehemiah together.”

If the two reformers actions were equatable, then Grabbe raises a valid point, suggesting a 398 BCE date for Ezra's arrival. However, the approaches of the two reformers were very different, suggesting possibly different circumstances.

These different approaches, some consider (Batten)²³⁸, suggest that Ezra faced a more difficult task than Nehemiah. This is because Ezra approaches the problem in a hard-line, vigorous and organised manner, whereas Nehemiah's method appears more personal, and mild. Bright²³⁹ states

²³⁶for example over mixed marriages Ezra 10:5, Nehemiah 13:25

²³⁷L.L.Grabbe *Judaism from Cyrus to Hadrian* 137

²³⁸L.W.Batten *Ezra and Nehemiah* 28

²³⁹J.Bright *History of Israel* 395

"Nehemiah's reforms (Ch. 13), if not milder than Ezra's were certainly less consequent, having the earmarks of a series of *ad hoc* measures."

This different approach warrants attention, as the difference may suggest clues as to which reform came first. Bright²⁴⁰ considers that the softer line of Nehemiah naturally precedes the more severe reforms of Ezra. Consequently, Ezra would most likely have made his reforms in the reign of Artaxerxes II, after that of Nehemiah, in order to allow time for the problem of mixed marriages to reassert itself. There are three main questions that arise out of the different ways in which the issue is considered.

i. Was Ezra more severe than Nehemiah?

To answer this question the approach of the two reformers needs to be analysed.

a. Ezra's Approach

Ezra's role as the spiritual leader of Israel meant that he had to be very certain and clear about applying and maintaining the Law of God. The Law for a Jew was already well defined, and it forbade inter-societal marriage when the foreigner was not a fully recognised proselyte. The Deuteronomic literature of Deuteronomy 7:3, and Joshua 23:12-13 forbids this, as do the older sources²⁴¹ of Genesis 24:3 and 28:1. Ezra as the one responsible for reintroducing the Law was following the pattern required in the references above. Mixed marriages must stop. He dealt firmly and decisively with the breaking of the law in Ch 10:10 ff. by forcing the guilty parties to divorce, and swear an oath never to let their children marry a foreigner (Nehemiah 10:30). Therefore Ezra is only seen as applying the Law of God, which was his role in any case. The authority is from the Law, not Ezra; he merely allows the Law to speak. For this reason the people accept the severe treatment Ezra recommends. Ezra presents the Law (Ezra 9), and allows it to alter the behaviour of the people (which it does by Ezra 10:2). Considering his methodology, the mixed marriage reform is not harsh, but a standard religious approach consistent with the way that this man 'got things done'. Williamson²⁴² says

"Ezra's handling of the problem of mixed marriages is noteworthy in that, quite unlike Nehemiah (cf. Neh 13:23-27), he used no direct coercion, but rather encouraged the people to see the problem for themselves and so formulate their own response".

Eskenazi²⁴³ adds

"Ezra scorns no one, attacks no one. He does not threaten with penalties (which he is clearly authorised to impose on the basis of Ezra 7:12-26) nor does he command. He subjects only himself to repentance, fasting, and mourning. His example stirs the community's conscience and prompts the people to act".

²⁴⁰J. Bright *History of Israel* 395

²⁴¹though subject to later redaction, the source story suggests the teaching Ezra applies

²⁴²H.G.M. Williamson *Ezra, Nehemiah* 133

²⁴³T.C. Eskenazi *In An Age Of Prose* 139-140

So, it seems that the attitude of Ezra was not harsh, but merely true to the Law that he was implementing. Politically, he had a mandate for anything from execution to confiscation of goods (Ezra 7:26). Joshua 23:12-13 suggests that banishment from the people of Israel might have been an appropriate punishment for such lawbreaking. In actuality, the people self-regulated the situation by 'putting away' (banishing) the foreign wives, and so conformed to the law (Ezra 10:3).

b. Nehemiah's approach

Nehemiah is (e.g. Brockington)²⁴⁴ considered gentler in his approach, and more lenient. He contented himself with making Israel swear by God not to marry, or give their sons in marriage to a foreigner (Nehemiah 13:25). However, the reforms that Nehemiah instituted were far from mild. There was physical punishment, as well as rebuke. Nehemiah 13:25 mentions "I contended with them, and cursed them, and beat some of the men and pulled out their hair".²⁴⁵ Nehemiah's reforms were therefore not merely mild administrative rebukes, but were forceful and direct. Indeed, there is evidence to suggest that Nehemiah was only applying the law already revealed on this issue. The reasons that may be adduced in favour of this are as follows:

Firstly, the passage in its present context follows on from Nehemiah 10, where Ezra has made the people swear an oath binding them to a covenant. This covenant oath includes a ban on inter-societal marriage (Nehemiah 10:30). Therefore Nehemiah in chapter 13, is merely implementing Ezra's previous policy²⁴⁶ including an oath (Nehemiah 13:25). However, the difficulties relating to Nehemiah 10 makes this an uncertain piece of reasoning.

Secondly, if the oath which Nehemiah makes the people take (Nehemiah 13:25) does not follow on from the work of Ezra in Nehemiah 10, then the contents of this oath are not recorded. It seems that it still must have included the putting away of foreign wives as had Ezra's reforms. An oath promising not to take foreign wives would have been meaningless without first promising to put away those already in existence. So it seems probable that Nehemiah was not being less severe, merely more restrained in his phraseology. The two reformers seem to have had the same policy, namely divorce, with oaths confirming their

²⁴⁴L.H.Brockington *Ezra, Nehemiah and Esther* 211-212

²⁴⁵This differs from the R.S.V. by the addition of 'the men'. This is shown in the Hebrew by the gender ending, but not included in the text. It is true that the masculine is also a common ending, but in this context, where the male was the head of the house, it seems reasonable to suppose that this was a male group.

²⁴⁶assuming that the oath of Nehemiah 10 was based on the teaching of Ezra in Nehemiah 8, and that Nehemiah 10 does not arise out of the agenda from Nehemiah 13.

future obedience. Additionally Nehemiah adds that he struck some of them, which now makes him appear more harsh than Ezra, not less.

ii. Was Nehemiah's Problem Only Localised?

The location of the troubled areas seems very limited. Nehemiah deals with the problem among the Ashdodites, Ammonites, and Moabites in Nehemiah 13:23 but among none of the people in Samaria (except one case in Nehemiah 13:28). The limited nature of Nehemiah's reforms might be further limited on textual grounds, for there is a textual question over the inclusion of the words 'Ammon and Moab'. The three place names are merely listed, (Nehemiah 13:23) with no formal connection such as a **ו** or **וְ**.

Williamson²⁴⁷ says that such an occurrence is

"as curious in Hebrew as it would be in English".

Verse 24 further considers the Ashdodites, but ignores the words Ammon and Moab.

These unnaturally linked words in v.23 might therefore indicate a later editorial gloss.

Williamson²⁴⁸ suggests that this was added to provide

"A legal explanation of the status of Ashdod, for earlier in this chapter we have been reminded of the Deuteronomic law that an Ammonite and a Moabite should not enter into the assembly of God forever (Nehemiah 13:1)"

If this is the case, then Nehemiah's reform is limited to the Ashdodites, and one case in Samaria alone. This indeed represents a limited, localised reform.

The phrasing of Nehemiah's reforms also suggests that they are directed against a small scale abuse of the law, not a widespread disobedience, which was the case in Ezra's situation. The words Nehemiah chooses to describe his encounter (Nehemiah 13:23-25) indicate the limited extent of his reforms. They seem to imply that he was talking face to face with them and hence suggests a limited, almost private hearing. It was not a big public declaration as in Ezra's day.

However, in Ezra's situation, there was a widespread problem occurring throughout Israelite society. This is seen in Ezra 9:1, where the problem occurs among the people, the Levites, and the Priests. It was a widespread problem, not confined to Jerusalem alone, for Ezra 10:14 mentions that people from other cities were also responding to this reform. The geographical extent of the problem in Ezra's time, suggests that his reforms came first. Nehemiah's reforms then followed, addressing the smaller isolated cases, where the problem was again occurring.

²⁴⁷H.G.M. Williamson *Ezra and Nehemiah* 66

²⁴⁸H.G.M. Williamson *Ezra and Nehemiah* 66

iii. The Lack Of Reference To The Previous Reform

This question has been discussed in detail in chapter 3 section G, and so will not be continued here, save to note that while it is unexpected, it is merely a reflexive argument, as whichever reformer was second failed to refer to the previous reforms.

Summary

- i. There is no evidence to suggest that Ezra's reforms were either more harsh than Nehemiah's, or less so.
- ii. There is a possibility that Nehemiah's reforms in Nehemiah 13 were of a small, limited scale, and followed the reforms made in Ezra 10. Alternatively, Ezra's reforms could address an issue considerably later than those addressed by Nehemiah.

These conclusions suggest the following about the relative ordering of Ezra and Nehemiah

.. Assuming Nehemiah 8-10 belongs in the book of Nehemiah; Ezra and Nehemiah are portrayed as contemporaries. In this case, Nehemiah's reforms have to be later than Ezra's, for they are detailed in Nehemiah 13 in the second period of Nehemiah's dwelling in Jerusalem. Further, Nehemiah 13 implements the oaths taken in Nehemiah 10, suggesting that Ezra's actions (if he is to be linked to the oaths in Nehemiah 10) predate those of Nehemiah. This places Ezra's arrival in 458 BCE, with his reforms following shortly in 445 BCE. Nehemiah's more limited reforms then followed as a mild corrective of limited initial abuse in the beginning of his second period in Jerusalem.

ii. If the passage of Nehemiah 8-10 is relocated into the Ezra memoir, and Nehemiah's involvement is removed from Ezra's reforms, then the most reasonable scenario has Ezra arriving in 398 BCE much later than Nehemiah. This allows more time for the abuses of the Law to develop, between the two reformers' visits, than if Ezra arrived in 458 BCE. If 25 plus years²⁴⁹ is considered sufficient for the abuses to develop, then 458 is an equally acceptable date as 398 for Ezra's arrival.

iii. The one position that seems less likely here, is that Ezra came soon after Nehemiah. This is because the reforms in Nehemiah 13 (if made in 433 BCE - Nehemiah 13:6) would have to have been followed by Ezra's reforms within 5 years.²⁵⁰ This period is very short for such widespread abuse of the law to have occurred, as is recorded in Ezra's account. The only way that such a date is acceptable is to consider that Nehemiah's reforms were

²⁴⁹Thirteen years from 458 to 445, followed by the twelve years of Nehemiah's governorship, then an indeterminate period in Susa before returning once more to Jerusalem to initiate the reforms of Nehemiah 13.

²⁵⁰depending upon the length of Nehemiah's stay at court before returning to Jerusalem

unsuccessful. While the reforms are assumed by the tone of the passage to have been successful, there is no actual evidence of this.

2. Nehemiah's Four Treasurers

A further reform that Nehemiah made concerns the Temple finances. Nehemiah appointed four treasurers to look after the Temple treasures. Nehemiah 13:13 refers to this. The text has **וְאֹצְרֵיהֶם** for treasurer, from the root word **אָצַר** "to lay up, store up"²⁵¹ seen here in the hiphil imperfect, thus implying the causation rendered by the N.I.V. 'I put'. Therefore the text has Nehemiah instigating this office. However, existing treasurers are mentioned in the Ezra account (Ezra 7:21). This implies that Ezra came after Nehemiah, for otherwise, Nehemiah would not have had to re-establish the office. To go further, Rowley²⁵² points out that there is no

"indication that Nehemiah's action was the reconstitution of something that had fallen to pieces while he had been absent from Jerusalem."

Therefore Nehemiah 13:13 suggests that there had been no treasurer for a long period, whereas Ezra 7:21 suggests that there had been. Therefore Ezra has to have arrived after Nehemiah.

However, the references in the two accounts are not comparable. This is because the reference to treasurers in Ezra 7:21 comes in the middle of a general comment by Artaxerxes made without knowing the situation in Jerusalem. Artaxerxes merely assumes the existence of such an office, such as might be found in all the Persian Empire, he does not have specific knowledge related to Judah. Therefore the reference does not relate to a specific Jewish individual or office, but is a general reference to 'what usually is'. It is therefore not a comparable reference to Nehemiah 13:13, which is a specific reference made by a local ruler in a specific situation.

Apart from a reference (irrelevant for this purpose) in Ezra 1:8 to Mithredath the Imperial treasurer, the only other possible reference in Ezra to the same office that Nehemiah refers to is Ezra 8:33. There, Meremoth brings the gold and silver into the Temple, and four people are on hand to witness the fact formally. Yamauchi²⁵³ sees this as a reference to the same office as the temple treasurers of Nehemiah. However, the term **וְאֹצְרֵיהֶם** is not used in Ezra 8:33. The group of people are mentioned merely as an interested party. Yamauchi²⁵⁴ himself acknowledges the disparity

²⁵¹BDB 69

²⁵²H.H.Rowley *Servant of the Lord* 162

²⁵³E.M.Yamauchi 'The Reverse Order Of Ezra-Nehemiah Reconsidered' *Themelios* 10

²⁵⁴E.M.Yamauchi 'The Reverse Order Of Ezra-Nehemiah Reconsidered' *Themelios* 10

"The two committees, it should be noted, were not identical. Ezra's committee was made up of two priests and two Levites, but Nehemiah's was made up of a priest, a scribe, a Levite, and a layman."

Indeed the very existence of this group (with no official title) in the time of Ezra implies that there was no such office in Ezra's time, but that one was formed for this occasion.

Therefore no real conclusion can be drawn from Nehemiah's reform here. There is no link to be made between the reference to treasurers in Nehemiah, with any such reference in Ezra.

Conclusion

It seems that the issue over which reformer arrived first, is still unclear. The two reforms considered cannot point to any particular conclusion. The first, that of mixed marriages is contingent on the resolution of the issue of Nehemiah 8-10.

The two dates that seem most likely from this discussion are 398 or 458 BCE. The date of 398 BCE relies on the two reformers being non-contemporaneous, and the passage in Nehemiah 8-10 being moved into Ezra. The date of 458 BCE considers that Nehemiah's reforms in Ch 13 follow Ezra's covenantal work in Nehemiah 10. If this is the case, then it is likely that Ezra's reforms of Ezra 10 also precede Nehemiah's in Nehemiah 13.

The middle date, in the 27/37th year of Artaxerxes I is the least likely, as this view would have the two reformers working very closely together making their reforms contemporaneous. This is because Nehemiah's reforms (as discussed above) are dated to around the 32nd year of Artaxerxes I. A date of either 428 or 438 BCE therefore for Ezra's arrival and reforms falls within five years of Nehemiah's reform. This is a time span that certainly seems too short for the problems of mixed marriages to reassert themselves.

SECTION J

The Powers Granted To Them Both Are Very Similar

Given that both reformers were sent by a Persian king, it is unlikely that both Ezra and Nehemiah would have been sent to Israel by the same king within a short interval. It is more reasonable to suggest that Ezra was sent by the later king Artaxerxes II, after a generation had passed allowing the abuses to reoccur. However, this assumes that the powers and authority of Ezra and Nehemiah were comparable, and that either reformer could have completed the work of the other, thus invalidating the need for the second of the reformers. This assumption needs to be investigated.

1. The Powers Of The Two Reformers

Nehemiah was governor of the state (Nehemiah 5:14), with according to Bruce²⁵⁵

"A specific commission to rebuild Jerusalem's walls."

Further Bruce²⁵⁶ refers to Sanballat's rage over the fact that his

"right of supervision over Judea was diminished if not abolished by Nehemiah's appointment".

Ezra however, had no political power; instead he required letters of authority to justify his deeds and to gain the assistance of whatever provincial political powers he deemed necessary (Ezra 7:11,21). Any power in the political sense that he had was simply because of these letters. Nehemiah however had no need of such authorities; he was the political power. Without his political authority, Nehemiah could not have done the work that he was sent to do. He could not have fulfilled his role with only the authority that Ezra had. However, Nehemiah's authority would have been more than sufficient for the work of Ezra.

However Ezra did not come for political purposes, but for spiritual ones (the bringing of the Law, and the application of it to the people - Ezra 7:12-26). Such a role required religious rather than political authority. It is therefore in this field that Ezra's work needs to be understood. Ezra was a scribe and teacher of the Law, and it is to specifically religious ends that he worked. Here he had the necessary religious authority (Ezra 7.6). Nehemiah came without specific religious authority, in contrast to Ezra. Myers²⁵⁷ observes

"though Nehemiah was a deeply religious man, he was not a recognised authority in matters of Jewish law as Ezra was".

²⁵⁵F.F.Bruce *Israel and the Nations* 106

²⁵⁶F.F.Bruce *Israel and the Nations* 106

²⁵⁷J.M. Myers *Ezra Nehemiah* lvii

So then, Ezra's role required spiritual authority and qualifications, which Nehemiah (although evidently a devout follower of Yahweh) lacked. Nehemiah was however, called and equipped to operate on political levels, where Ezra was not. Therefore it is seen that the two roles did not overlap, but each required specific powers and qualities that were not held by the other reformer. Eskenazi²⁵⁸ writes

"A study of the portraits of Ezra and Nehemiah is finally a study in contrasts. But it is a contrast of a matched pair".

From this consideration of the roles, it seems that there was little in the way of an overlap of roles, but rather a complementary pairing. It is therefore entirely possible that Ezra and Nehemiah could have been contemporaries.

2. Nehemiah's religious involvement

Having stated that Nehemiah's role was political, it is necessary to note that Nehemiah did carry out some religious reforms. Rowley²⁵⁹ lists four situations where the two reformers' roles did overlap significantly.

- Nehemiah Ch 7:64 ff. (relating to the legal right of those people who wished to be priests)
- Nehemiah 10:32 ff. where Nehemiah dealt with both the people's relationships with outsiders in terms of trade, and with taxes to the temple.
- Nehemiah 13:10-11 the Temple treasures and Tithes
- Nehemiah 13:15 ff. the Sabbath regulations

Nehemiah's role, though chiefly political, also included involvement with the religious problems of the day. On the basis of Nehemiah's involvement in religious reforms, it seems that the distinction made above between Ezra and Nehemiah on the grounds of political and religious authority is a false dichotomy.

However in the list above, Nehemiah's first two reforms both relate to political issues. The first reform relating to rights to Priesthood is an issue that was as much political as spiritual in a nation where the political authority is derived from the religious sphere. The two areas of spiritual and political overlapped in this area, as they do in many societies today. The second reform regulates the behaviour of non-Israelite traders, and therefore also forms what may be regarded as a political issue. Therefore both reforms, while containing a spiritual dimension, also legitimately fall within the political arena. The second two reforms are located in chapter 13, which does not refer to the same period as the previous chapters, but to Nehemiah's second term in Jerusalem.

²⁵⁸T.C.Eskenazi *In An Age Of Prose* 152

²⁵⁹H.H.Rowley *Men of God* 237 fn 2

This needs to be remembered in analysing the reforms. Nehemiah in chapter 13 returns from a period in Susa following his first term. After a visit to Artaxerxes (Nehemiah 13:6) in the 32nd (or possibly 22nd) year of his reign, Nehemiah returned to Jerusalem. On his return it seems that Nehemiah was no longer governor. Nehemiah himself says in 5:14 that he was governor in the land for only 12 years, to the 32nd year of Artaxerxes I, 431 BCE. It therefore seems likely that from this point on he no longer had the powers he once enjoyed. Nehemiah was no longer politically active, but remained so spiritually. If this was the case, then Nehemiah returned in Ch 13 in a different role. Cheyne considers the role one of 'revered elder statesman'. Referring to Nehemiah in his second period Cheyne²⁶⁰ says

"He now appears more than formerly as a religious reformer"

The period sees him ...

- Ejecting Tobiah from the Temple, 13:4-9
- Making provision for Levites that had left Jerusalem 13:10-14
- Preventing traders from coming into Jerusalem on the Sabbath 13:19-22
- Reform among those marrying foreign wives 13:22-27
- Expelling Eliashib's grandson from Jerusalem for mixed marriages 13:28
- Disciplining Priests who had desecrated their office 13:29

Nehemiah's return in Ch 13 sees his only overtly religious reforms. Now he is apparently free to devote himself to religious matters. For this reason it is reasonable to conclude that he was not contemporaneous with Ezra in the period covered by chapter 13. This points against Ezra's arrival in the 27-37th year of Artaxerxes I, as Nehemiah had by that time returned to carry out religious reforms. These would have overlapped with, or come very close to those reforms of Ezra returning at this time.

Conclusion

There is then a real dichotomy between Ezra's work and the first period of Nehemiah's presence in Jerusalem. Ezra, without the necessary training and authority, was not able to govern the country in the political sense. Nehemiah similarly was unable to govern the spiritual aspect of the nation, without recourse to the spiritual law. He was not a recognised teacher of that law, and so needed the legitimisation²⁶¹ until chapter 13:7,10, by which time the law had apparently become better known.

²⁶⁰T.K.Cheyne *Encyclopaedia Biblica* 3385

²⁶¹ Chapter two considered the theological framework to require exactly this order for the same reason.

This overlap of responsibilities implies therefore that Ezra could not have come to Jerusalem in 428 BCE, during Nehemiah's second time in Jerusalem, for that would indeed clash with Nehemiah's reform programme of Ch 13.

In summary then, the text does not indicate that Ezra could not have been contemporary with Nehemiah. It rather implies that Ezra worked in Jerusalem before Nehemiah, overlapping with the first period of Nehemiah's presence, due to the complementarity of the two roles. Alternatively, Ezra could equally easily have arrived in 398 BCE. The 428 BCE date is the only one that poses a difficulty here.

SECTION K

Ezra's Apparent Failure To Complete The Wall Building

The events in Ezra chapter 4.12 refer to the returning Israelites attempting to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem. As this chapter is definitely to be dated before 445 BCE, it indicates that some start was made to the wall building before Nehemiah appeared. This attempt however was to fail, which occasioned Nehemiah's sadness recorded in Nehemiah 1:4.

If the traditional ordering of Ezra-Nehemiah is maintained, then Ezra apparently worked in Jerusalem throughout the time referred to in Ezra 4, where this failed attempt is mentioned. If Ezra was in Jerusalem then, he would most likely have been involved in this project as the most significant religious leader of the period. However, if Ezra was involved in the wall building, it means that this part of his work was a failure, especially when linked to the report given in Nehemiah 1. The traditional views about Ezra see him as a second Moses, with success attending him in all his endeavour. There is no suggestion that he may have been associated with such a failure. Therefore, if Ezra cannot be associated with failure, then Ezra must have returned to Jerusalem some time after this failed attempt. This points to a date after Nehemiah, when the walls had been completed. Rowley²⁶² suggests this when he says

"the association of Ezra with the wall of Ezra 4:7-23 is wholly gratuitous. He is not mentioned at all in connexion with the affair. Granted that there was an unsuccessful attempt to build the walls in the time of Artaxerxes I, there is no reason whatever, to connect it with Ezra. It is entirely unrelated to the mission with which he was charged."

This relationship between the wall building of Ezra 4 and Ezra's arrival therefore needs careful examination, as it appears to suggest that Ezra could not have arrived before 445 BCE.

1. Ezra arrived in Jerusalem after Nehemiah

If Ezra came to Jerusalem after Nehemiah, then Ezra was not involved in the wall building. His arrival could have been in either 428, or 398 BCE. There is no way to distinguish between the two dates. A 458 BCE date for Ezra's arrival is however difficult, because of the wall building of Ezra chapter 4.

2. Ezra was involved in the wall building

The wall building attempt mentioned in Ezra 4 is possibly linked to the rebellion by Megabyzos in 448/7 BCE. Blenkinsopp²⁶³ considers this when he says

²⁶²H.H.Rowley *Servant of the Lord* 150

²⁶³J. Blenkinsopp *Ezra-Nehemiah* 66

"there may, finally, be a connection between the short lived revolt of Megabyzus and the allegations of Mithredath and Rehum Ezra (4:7-23) leading to hostile intervention and thus to the mission of Nehemiah."

Wall building and fortifications would then have been regarded suspiciously, and the work stopped (Ezra 4:17-23), finally requiring the arrival of Nehemiah. The walls were razed to the ground, and the city was in a sad state. On the face of it therefore, those in office, and the champions of the wall would be in disfavour, including Ezra if involved. This shame, and defeat, if attributable to Ezra could also account for the 13 silent years of Ezra's ministry where according to this reconstruction his reputation was recovering from the disaster. However, such a view has to ignore Jewish tradition relating to Ezra's reputation. Therefore, it seems possible that Ezra was both involved, and suffered under the failure. The suffering may then be used to explain another anomaly in Ezra's activities, namely the apparent 13 years' silence. Then, the incident recorded in Ezra 4:12-24 is Ezra's recall to the capital after only a short time there, with the disgrace of being involved in an action which the King did not approve.

If this is the correct reconstruction, it would be necessary for Ezra to return to Jerusalem again as a private citizen for the time of Nehemiah chapter 8 (if the text is standing in the correct position). Then he would not be directly involved in the work, but rather as a revered elder statesman brought into the major religious occasions. It is possible that Ezra had been invited back especially for this purpose, departing again by the beginning of Nehemiah 13.

All the above is a clever reconstruction of events, but is purely hypothetical, with no evidence to substantiate it. Indeed, the rebellion itself, only resting on the testimony of one ancient historian is a little uncertain. Hoglund²⁶⁴, while accepting it refers to it as

"the Megabyzos Revolt that allegedly followed"

It also does not deal with the loss of prestige that would have occurred, were Ezra involved in the wall building.

3. Ezra was in Jerusalem before Nehemiah, but not involved in the wall building.

It is mere conjecture to suppose that Ezra would automatically be involved in such a project even if he was present in Jerusalem at the time. This is especially true if the wall building attempt was not in the first year of the reign of Artaxerxes I, but instead (as suggested previously) linked to the revolt under Megabyzus in 447 BCE. Ezra's role was a spiritual one, not a political or military one. He would not have necessarily have had

²⁶⁴ K.Hoglund *Achaemenid Imperial Administration in Syria-Palestine and the Missions of Ezra and Nehemiah* 88

anything to do with a civil engineering project such as this (especially if it meant rebellion against the authorities). If this is the case, then no conclusions are possible from this section.

4. Ezra was Not In Jerusalem at the Time

It is possible that the wall building occurred *before* the seventh year of Artaxerxes I (subsection 1 considered 438/398 BCE dates for Ezra's arrival). The text is not explicit about this; Ezra 4.7 merely indicates that the letters of complaint from Rehum to the Emperor were sent 'in the days of Artaxerxes'. However, the lack of reference to it in the Ezra memoirs, and the only reference occurring in Ezra 1-6 might indicate a period before Ezra's arrival in Jerusalem. The wall building could have been attempted at a maximum of seven years before the earliest date that Ezra could have arrived in Jerusalem. If the letters were sent in the first year of Artaxerxes I's reign, then it is reasonable to suppose at the issue had been resolved by the 7th year, and so Ezra had not been involved in the attempt.

It is also possible that Ezra's arrival was part of the Persian response to the abortive preparations in Judah for a different rebellion (by building this wall). Grabbe²⁶⁵ mentions an Egyptian rebellion in 460 BCE, and suggests that Ezra's mission

“may well have had the Egyptian revolt as a background”

Morgenstern²⁶⁶ suggested that the favourable policy towards Judah in the fifth century was the result of this Egyptian rebellion assisted by the Greeks. Ezra and Nehemiah were therefore part of the Persian response to unrest in this area. The attempt was to stabilise the area, and create a populace that was pro-Persian. This isolates the wall-building from the Megabyzos rebellion, placing it before Ezra's arrival, in around 460 BCE, in the first years of Artaxerxes I reign.

Conclusion

Though there is an elegant reconstruction that does allow Ezra to be part of the wall building, and still survive the failure of it, the lack of evidence for that possibility weighs against it. The idea that he was in Jerusalem, and not part of it also suffers the same weakness. Thus the conclusion has to be that Ezra was not in Jerusalem at the time of the abortive wall building. However, a date of 458, 428, or 398 BCE dates are still possible even if Ezra was not involved.

²⁶⁵L.L.Grabbe *Judaism from Cyrus to Hadrian* 131

²⁶⁶J.Morgenstern 'A Chapter in the History of the High-priesthood - Concluded' *AJSL* 55 375

There seems little evidence to guide discussion forward in this debate, and any of the proposed dates for Ezra are supported by a valid logical approach. The simplest, clearest solution places Ezra in 398 BCE, or 428 BCE. However, there is no reason from this issue, to disregard *any* of the potential dates of Ezra's arrival in Jerusalem.

SECTION L

Ezra's Wall Around Jerusalem

Following on from the last section referring to the walls apparently built in Ezra chapter 4, there is another reference to Jerusalem's city walls in Ezra's prayer (Ezra 9:9). There he refers to a wall in Jerusalem. This reference has been taken as relating to Nehemiah's wall (Batten),²⁶⁷ and therefore implies that Ezra came after Nehemiah. Ezra's coming would therefore have been in either 398 or 428 BCE. The latter date is the most likely as the wall would have still been relatively new in 428 BCE. There was therefore still a reason to praise the God who had protected and provided it. Nevertheless, such an approach makes several assumptions that need examining

. Only One Wall

.he first assumption made is that there was only one wall (Nehemiah's) to which Ezra could have been referring. However, as discussed in the previous section, it is probable that some wall-building efforts had been undertaken earlier (Ezra ch.4:12,13,16) which had been destroyed before Nehemiah's mission. Ezra may therefore have had these walls in mind, when referring to them in Ezra 9:9. This means that Ezra could have arrived before Nehemiah, and be referring to the wall of Ezra 4 that had been demolished before the time of Nehemiah, but which might still be standing in Ezra 9. However, as has been discussed in the previous section, associating Ezra with the walls in Ezra 4 is not readily acceptable (e.g. Rowley).²⁶⁸

While it is possible therefore that Ezra could have been referring to the wall of Ezra 4, such a position requires assumptions about the length of existence of that wall, for which there is no textual evidence. It is simplest to consider that the reference in Ezra 9:9 refers to Nehemiah's wall.

2. Did Ezra Refer to a Literal Wall?

The second assumption is that Ezra's reference in 9:9 was to an actual wall. The whole focus of Ezra's prayer and the people's gathering had been the Temple and its completion. This was a spiritual occasion, and it would be quite possible that Ezra's reference to city walls in his prayer was a figure of speech. Many scholars today consider this to be the case (Clines, Brockington, Williamson).²⁶⁹ This possibility is supported by the following considerations

²⁶⁷L.W.Batten *Ezra and Nehemiah* 334

²⁶⁸H.H.Rowley *Servant of the Lord* 150

²⁶⁹D.J.A. Clines *Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther* 124

i. The Wall Was Around Judah

The wall is described as being in 'Judea and Jerusalem,' and so cannot in any way be referring to a wall around Jerusalem, but to God's wall of protection around His people

ii. Other References In The Prayer Were Metaphorical

Ezra also thanked God in his prayer, for a nail in his Holy place. There is no suggestion that this reference is literal, and that there was a particular nail in the Temple that was significant to Judah.

iii. Ezra Uses An Unusual Word

The Hebrew word used in the prayer is גִּדֵּר, not the more usual word for wall חֹמָה, which appears in Nehemiah 1:3, referring to Nehemiah's city wall. In Hebrew the word גִּדֵּר is rare. It does not appear again in Ezra-Nehemiah. In the rest of the Hebrew scriptures the word is only used occasionally. It usually means a low wall or fence about vineyards (Isaiah 5:5, Psalms 80:12), bordering a road (Numbers 22:24, Ezekiel 10:8) or the rather larger wall around the Temple Court (Ezekiel 42:7). In only one instance does the word mean city wall (Micah 7:11) though even there its usage is debatable (Scott).²⁷⁰

"the word here translated walls *geder*, does not occur again in the whole of Ezra-Nehemiah though the wall was one of its biggest topics. Only once out of all its uses in the Old Testament does the word refer to a city wall (Mic 7¹¹)",

Winton Thomas²⁷¹ discusses the usage of the word גִּדֵּר in the wineries that have been excavated in Gibeon. He says

"The word GDR which appears on the inscribed jar handles from El-Jib ... appears a number of times in the Old Testament where it has variously been translated as 'wall' 'fence' or 'hedge'. It now appears that GDR may have a meaning like the French *clos*, meaning a section of a vineyard, a walled enclosure, or vineyard."

Conclusion

There is no certainty that Ezra's reference does relate to Nehemiah's wall, though if it is a literal reference, then Nehemiah's wall remains the most likely. The discussion above suggests that Ezra's reference is more probably metaphorical than literal, and so it has no relevance to Nehemiah's wall or the wall mentioned in Ezra 4. In either case, the issue

L.H. Brockington *Ezra, Nehemiah and Esther* 109

H.G.M. Williamson *Ezra, Nehemiah* 136

²⁷⁰W.M.F. Scott 'Nehemiah-Ezra ?' *ET* 264

²⁷¹D.W. Thomas *Archaeology and Old Testament Study* 241

has no contribution to the debate over the relative dating of Ezra and Nehemiah Rowley²⁷² concludes

"It may be agreed that this argument for the priority of Nehemiah is not a strong one."

²⁷²H.H.Rowley *Servant of the Lord* 148

SECTION M

The Population Of Jerusalem

Ezra 10:1 mentions a large congregation in Jerusalem. He speaks of the city as if it contained a normal population, with no mention of ruins or destruction. Nehemiah however sees Jerusalem in a different way, sparsely populated, and with the walls in ruins (Nehemiah 7:4, 1:3). From this, Rowley²⁷³ suggests that Ezra came to Jerusalem after Nehemiah, by which time Nehemiah had rebuilt Jerusalem, and the population had become well established. However, the suggestion is based upon two uncertain assumptions.

- i. a slow growth rate of the population as would be usual with a settling population. There would be a slow trickle of returning Jews, and a steady birth rate
- ii. Nothing catastrophic that might lead to a depopulation.²⁷⁴

Given those assumptions, several indicators relating to the size of the population of Jerusalem arise from the texts.

1. The Crowd In Ezra 10

A later verse commenting on the extra people that needed to hear the message already heard by this crowd (Ezra 10:7) mentions that all Judah and Jerusalem need to gather to hear this message. However, this does not necessarily imply that the crowd mentioned in verse 1 was entirely local. Verse 7 states simply that there were many more people in Israel, that needed to come to hear the message of Ezra, than were currently present. The verse therefore says nothing about the composition of the crowd. So the assumption that Ezra 10:1 relates to a large congregation of people, who were entirely inhabitants of the city, is not upheld by Ezra 10:7.

If the crowd of verse 1 is not a crowd drawn from the locality, then the references in Ezra and Nehemiah are not comparable. Ezra 10:1 indicates the existence of a large number of religious Jews in and around Jerusalem, but no further conclusions are possible as to the numbers of those living in Jerusalem from that chapter.

²⁷³H.H.Rowley *Servant of The Lord* 152

²⁷⁴ This assumption is not necessarily valid. Blenkinsopp (*Ezra-Nehemiah* 66) suggested the possibility of a recent disaster between Ezra's day and Nehemiah's arrival had occurred, i.e. the destruction of the recent wall building programme. (see chapter 3 section K)

2. Nehemiah 7:4 Refers To The City As Desolate

Nehemiah 7:4 (already mentioned in connection with this issue) is worthy of consideration. The verse is not making a statement about the non-existence of people or houses in Jerusalem, as suggested at the beginning of this section. Rather, Nehemiah referred to the structure of the city as one responsible for repairing it, and re-establishing it as a population centre. Nehemiah's 'few' is a relative term, regarding the numbers required to organise, administer and run a city the size of Jerusalem. From Ezra's point of view standing up to address and teach; a crowd of 5,000 would be vast. From Nehemiah's viewpoint such a crowd would be an insufficient population to keep a capital city maintained. Scott²⁷⁵ illustrates this when he recounts

"when visiting Plymouth in 1942 I was told that it was a city of the dead and that the streets were deserted. I could see with my own eyes, that the place was in ruins - 'the city was wide and large; but the people were few therein, and the houses were not builded'. But outside St Catherine's church at 6.15 p.m. on Easter Day I found a notice 'All seats taken'. There was evidently 'a very great congregation'".

3. Ezra 10:9 Has A Crowd Gathering In The Temple Square

Another significant reference is Ezra Ch 10:9-13. This text mentions firstly that all the men of Benjamin and Judah met in the Temple square. This square would not have been big enough for a normal city-wide population; let alone any extra Jews from surrounding villages. Nevertheless, Ezra 10:9 places them in the square. This therefore may imply that in Ezra's day the population of Judah and Benjamin was smaller than that of Nehemiah's for Nehemiah has a large population in mind when rebuilding the walls for example. Given that Ezra 10:9 states that they *did* all gather in the square, then either the author is being very selective in the use of the word 'all', or the number of religiously active Jews in Israel was so small that they *were* all literally able to gather there.

However, the reference in Ezra 10:9 may be more embracing than this, as verse 7 mentions a proclamation made to *all* the descendants of the captivity throughout Judah and Jerusalem. This was clearly intended to invite the whole population, with severe penalties for non-attendance (v.8). The crowd that gathered, therefore (while probably not the entire population of the returned exiles), is likely to have represented the majority of the population at that time. This crowd was considered to be a large congregation in Ezra 10:1, was also able to fit within the confines of the Temple square. Nehemiah however, involved in city wide work, was considering larger numbers than this. Therefore it does

²⁷⁵W.M.F.Scott 'Nehemiah-Ezra ?' ET 264

appear from this reference that the population in Ezra's day was smaller than that in Nehemiah's.

4. The Wealth Of Nehemiah's Population

From an indirect viewpoint, there is evidence that the population in Jerusalem was wealthier in Nehemiah's day than in Ezra's. During the time of Ezra, the people were unable to support the Temple (Ezra 7:20), and needed help from the royal treasury. However, in Nehemiah's day the Jews were able to support the Temple worship themselves (Nehemiah 10:32 ff.). As wealth usually takes time to accumulate for populations, even more so than for individuals, this implies that the population in Nehemiah's day was older, and better established. However, any catastrophe would have impoverished the people of Israel in these early stages of their return. This would make them poorer in the latter period than the former, and therefore removing the indication that Ezra came before Nehemiah. Nevertheless, a basic assumption made above is that the city had not suffered a catastrophe of this sort. Therefore on this issue of wealth, it looks more likely that Ezra came before Nehemiah than after him.

Conclusion

In conclusion then, there is no firm evidence that Nehemiah's population was smaller than Ezra's, and therefore there is no indication that Nehemiah came to Jerusalem before Ezra. Indeed there are some suggestions that Ezra's population was poorer and smaller than Nehemiah's which points (based on the assumptions of population growth made throughout this section) to Ezra's priority over Nehemiah. However, no firm indications as to the dates of Ezra and Nehemiah are possible from this issue, and the whole debate is based on an assumption of steady population growth that is possibly wrong.

SUMMARY

The summary of conclusions from the different sections is as follows

Section	Possible dates for Ezra's arrival		
	458 BCE	428 BCE	398 BCE
Section A	possible	possible	less likely
Section B	possible	possible	less likely
Section C	possible	less likely	possible
Section D	possible	possible	less likely
Section E	no conclusions can be drawn		
Section F	possible	possible	less likely
Section G	no conclusions can be drawn		
Section H	less likely	possible	less likely
Section I	possible	less likely	possible
Section J	possible	less likely	possible
Section K	less likely	possible	possible
Section L	no conclusions can be drawn		
Section M	no conclusions can be drawn		

None of these conclusions are decisive, and while some of them might be considered more persuasive than others, a consideration of the relative strengths of the individual arguments has historically failed to reach a conclusion. This thesis is concerned with the cumulative rather than individual evidence.

Turning to examine this cumulative evidence, there are several conclusions that can be drawn. One significant conclusion to be drawn from the above table, relates to the different conclusions of sections B and C. Both sections relate to the debate over the reference in Ezra 7:7-8, and while both conclude that 458 BCE is a possible date, they conclude quite strongly that one of the other two dates is unlikely. The interesting fact is that they disagree as to which is unlikely. While both sections could suggest the 458 BCE date, both other dates are disqualified by one or other of the sections.

A second conclusion, considering sections D to G, is that it appears reasonable to assume a measure of contemporaneity between the two reformers. The argument from section D appears quite strongly to suggest some level of contemporaneity, while the other sections have little strength, or are inconclusive. If the two reformers are

contemporaneous, then of the dates under consideration, either 458 or 428 BCE, are possible, but 398 BCE is not.

Thirdly, in relation to the reforms that were made, considered in sections H to J, it appears that Ezra's reforms either came first, or were significantly after Nehemiah's. Section G in this regard carries quite a strong argument, though the other two sections are either weak, or too contingent on other issues (the place of Nehemiah 8). A date of 428 BCE seems unlikely here, though 398 BCE is possible. Relating this to sections D to G, again the date of 458 BCE is possible, whereas both the alternatives' options are disqualified by one group or the other.

Sections K to L all carry weak arguments that can add little to the debate.

From these interrelated conclusions taken together, it appears that the 458 BCE date for the arrival of Ezra is the most likely, and is supported by strong argument indirectly. None of the sections are conclusive, but some do exclude specific possible reconstructions. The 428 BCE date appears to be ruled out on the basis of the reforms, and as unlikely on the basis of the reference in Ezra 7:7. The 398 BCE date appears to be ruled out because of the apparent contemporaneity of the two reformers, and the context of the reference in Ezra 7:7.

On balance therefore, this section has to conclude that a 458 BCE date for Ezra, before Nehemiah's arrival, is more likely than any other conclusion, but no individual section is conclusive in the debate.

CHAPTER FOUR

INDIRECT AND EXTERNAL EVIDENCE FOR THE ARRIVAL DATES OF EZRA AND NEHEMIAH

The purpose of this chapter is to examine evidence relating to the relative dating of Ezra and Nehemiah. The chapter considers sources external to Ezra-Nehemiah. It examines literary sources external to the work Ezra-Nehemiah, relating to the historical period of Ezra-Nehemiah. This section therefore considers the significance of any passages from other parts of the Hebrew Canon, evidence from archaeology and linguistics that relate to the main thesis.

The chapter is progressively structured, dealing initially with sources external to the Hebrew scriptures. The chapter then considers the date of the events in Ezra-Nehemiah in comparison with known historical data, either from other biblical sources, linguistic study of Ezra-Nehemiah, or interpretation of archaeological discoveries.

The chapter is divided into sections to deal with the various topics. As conclusions relating to one area (as has been observed previously) may also apply to another at the end of the chapter, some conclusions are drawn following a holistic approach to all the topics. In this way the cumulative nature, and the inter-dependencies of the individual topics will be highlighted.

SECTION A

The Apocrypha

Within the Apocrypha, 1 Esdras is the main source of information for the period of Ezra-Nehemiah, and so is the main consideration of this section, though other apocryphal books also refer to either Ezra or Nehemiah, and will also be considered.

1. 1 ESDRAS

This book is significant as it refers to the events in the canonical book of Ezra, but does so in a different order from that seen in the canonical books. There are also occasional differences, and some new material. A comparison of the material in 1 Esdras with canonical books may be tabulated as follows:

Esdras	1.1-20	2 Chronicles 35.1-19
	1.21-22	no parallel
	1.23-55	2 Chronicles 35.20-36.21
	2.1-3a	2 Chronicles 36.22-23 & Ezra 1.1-3a
	2.3b-11	Ezra 1.3b-11
	2.12-26	4.7-24
	3.1-5.6	no parallel
	5.7-71	Ezra 2.1-4.5
	6.1-9.36	Ezra 5.1-10.44
	9.37-55	Nehemiah 7.72-8.13a

There are two important differences between the records of 1 Esdras, and Ezra-Nehemiah. Firstly, in 1 Esdras, Nehemiah's name does not occur, whereas in the canonical texts, Ezra and Nehemiah are presented as contemporaries. This suggests (Coggins)²⁷⁶ that the work of 1 Esdras points to a tradition where Ezra and Nehemiah worked totally independently, and probably at different times. The significance of this issue of contemporaneity has already been discussed in chapter 3 section D.

Some scholars²⁷⁷ suggest further that the 1 Esdras narrative represents the original translation of the LXX, and therefore is more anciently attested to, and more reliable than the Masoretic text of Ezra.

Therefore the implications of the historical ordering in 1 Esdras require examination. To do this, the purpose of 1 Esdras must firstly be examined and compared with the book Ezra-Nehemiah to determine which is more likely to represent historical detail more

²⁷⁶R.J.Coggins and M.A.Knibb *The First and Second Books of Esdras* 5

²⁷⁷L.W.Batten *Ezra and Nehemiah* 2

closely. The theological purpose of the works, and then the date of the sources that they represent will be examined.

i. Are 1 Esdras And Ezra Comparable?

The inter-relationship of the two works, and their original source documents, is an area of debate. There is a large measure of correspondence between the works (see the table above); however there are also notable differences between them. This has caused much speculation about the interrelationships and origins of the works. Eskenazi²⁷⁸ says

"The presence of such variant and yet closely related traditions about the return and restoration has engendered various explanations concerning their relation in terms of dependence, priority, unity etc., No consensus exists."

Some scholars (e.g. Eskenazi) consider that the theological purpose of 1 Esdras differs from that of Ezra's (which was discussed in chapter 2 section C). Eskenazi²⁷⁹ suggests that 1 Esdras appears to focus on the Davidic line, and the restoration of the Temple in the return of the heroic age. The book therefore contains a theme of restoration and hope in the returned Jewish nation as the continuation of the Davidic line and Solomonic Temple. There is a predominant interest in matters royal and priestly. Blenkinsopp²⁸⁰ agrees with this, considering the aim of the author of 1 Esdras to be to:

"elevate Zerubbabel and Ezra as the founding fathers at the expense of Nehemiah."

This difference in emphasis could explain why 1 Esdras omits reference to Nehemiah, for Nehemiah is neither Davidic, nor priestly. Zerubbabel and Ezra are, and therefore get pre-eminence in the work of 1 Esdras.

Eskenazi²⁸¹ suggests that the work of Ezra-Nehemiah in comparison, presents an historiographical account of the restoration of the Jews, in which both Ezra and Nehemiah play a significant part. Blenkinsopp²⁸² (considering the united work Chronicles-Ezra-Nehemiah) proposes that Ezra-Nehemiah is a segmented work, which as part of the continuation of the Chronicler's history, focuses on the great leaders Zerubbabel, Ezra and Nehemiah. Bremond's²⁸³ literary structure discussed in chapter 2 section C also places the leaders in this order, considering it part of the fundamental underlying structure of the work.

²⁷⁸T.C. Eskenazi *In An Age Of Prose* 156

²⁷⁹T.C. Eskenazi *In An Age Of Prose* 2

²⁸⁰J. Blenkinsopp *Ezra-Nehemiah* 57

²⁸¹T.C. Eskenazi *In An Age Of Prose* 2

²⁸²J. Blenkinsopp *Ezra-Nehemiah* 48

²⁸³C. Bremond *La Logique De Possibles Narratifs* 75

This difference in literary purpose between 1 Esdras and Ezra-Nehemiah has clearly resulted in a different focus and structure being placed on the books of 1 Esdras and Ezra-Nehemiah. This explains the different approaches to Nehemiah in the two works. As they have such a different perspective, it is unreasonable to suggest that the two documents should contain the same information in the same order, even though dealing with the same events. Therefore no conclusions about the order of Ezra and Nehemiah's arrival in Jerusalem are possible on the basis of Nehemiah's absence in 1 Esdras. It appears that the author deliberately left out Nehemiah's role, as insignificant for his purposes.

However, this is contested by Brockington.²⁸⁴ He notes that the omission of Nehemiah and the apparent emphasis noted by Eskenazi could simply be due to our lack of another hypothesised document where the author completes his history by relating the work of Nehemiah. Brockington suggests that

"it is conceivable that the translator also issued a translation of Nehemiah which has been completely lost."

Brockington therefore suggests that Eskenazi is arguing from silence in the above debate, but appears not to notice that he also argues from silence. The documents extant are all that can be extrapolated from. Therefore, while Brockington sounds a note of caution, Eskenazi makes a valid point..

ii. Implications of their different approaches

The view that 1 Esdras presents a theological, rather than historical order to his work raises questions about the ordering of material in Ezra-Nehemiah. If the author of 1 Esdras could produce what appears to be such a one-sided document in an era when his readers knew the real historical circumstances, could not the editor of Ezra-Nehemiah have done the same? The answer to such a question is naturally (a priori) positive. However, the theological agenda of the editor, and his approach to historical detail has to be considered. Chapter 2 section C considered that in the case of the editor of Ezra-Nehemiah, the literary structure contained within it the shape of the historical structure. The editor, with his regular dating structure, was deliberately portraying a historical basis to his theology, absent from the work of 1 Esdras. This historical appearance to the work makes claims that the readers would have been able to challenge if they were aware of its inaccuracy, or of any significant omissions.

The author of 1 Esdras on the other hand is presenting something less than the history of the returning exiles. He presents a clear history of the Davidic Priestly line, with little consideration for the political dimension. The purpose of his writing, being apparent,

²⁸⁴L.H. Brockington *Ezra, Nehemiah and Esther* 46

means that the readers would not be expecting a history of the whole period, merely a focus upon one vital facet. The difference between the two works therefore lies in the different portrayals that they appear to present. Thus whilst one is a biographical theology of a particular dynasty and therefore need not be comprehensive in its discussion of history, the other presents a theological history of the Jews (especially if the work Ezra-Nehemiah is to be linked to Chronicles) and *does* need to be accurate, and reasonably comprehensive in its coverage.

A biography is free to roam historically to point out the significance of events, have 'flashbacks' and to omit huge tracts of events that are considered insignificant to the main purpose. However, a 'history' is not free to do that. At best it can produce summary sections where detail is omitted, and thence large tracts of time are covered. The work Ezra-Nehemiah appears in that 'history' category rather more than the book of 1 Esdras does, while 1 Esdras appears to be closer to the 'biography' category than Ezra-Nehemiah.

Therefore based on the apparent authorial intention, 1 Esdras would be freer to relocate sections, and omit passages than would Ezra-Nehemiah.

iii. The Document Closest To The Autograph

Given the assumption that the earlier work is likely to represent the autograph more closely, the document relying on the earlier source is also more likely to reflect a more authentic chronological framework (unless there is a specific theological structure within the work that overrides the historical one).

The date of compilation of Ezra-Nehemiah has been discussed previously (chapter 2 section C, probably edited around 350 BCE). The date of authorship of 1 Esdras is also debated. One theory suggests²⁸⁵ that 1 Esdras is an 'ancient and reliable tradition' representative of an older work in which Chronicles-Ezra-Nehemiah is united. Batten²⁸⁶ suggests that 1 Esdras represents a close copy of the original LXX translation, and therefore is dated early, before Chronicles-Ezra-Nehemiah. Others²⁸⁷ date 1 Esdras very late suggesting a 2nd C. CE date. More recent suggestions²⁸⁸ consider that 1 Esdras is a later periphrastic derivation of the earlier canonical works. This latter explanation would also explain the apparent emphasis of 1 Esdras on themes also associated with the

²⁸⁵ J.Coggins and M.A.Knibb *The First and Second Books of Esdras* 5

²⁸⁶ L.W.Batten *Ezra and Nehemiah* 2

²⁸⁷ R.J.Coggins and M.A.Knibb *The First and Second Books of Esdras* 5

²⁸⁸ M.J.Selman *1 Chronicles* 67

R.J.Coggins and M.A.Knibb *The First and Second Books of Esdras* 5

Chronicler (royalty, priesthood, and temple). Coggins²⁸⁹ suggests this when he says that Esdras is likely to be

"a late attempt, probably from the very last centuries BC, to set out a less confused account of the traditions relating to Ezra."

Williamson, based on his discussion with Pohlmann concludes²⁹⁰

"1 Esdras is not a fragment of the original LXX"

The date of authorship of 1 Esdras is therefore very uncertain, and it may well not be closer to the autograph than Chronicles-Ezra-Nehemiah. Indeed, a later, rather than earlier date is being suggested for its authorship, and a source that is further from the autograph than Chronicles-Ezra-Nehemiah.

Therefore the suggestion of this section, that 1 Esdras does not record Ezra and Nehemiah as contemporaries, is significant, for two reasons. Firstly, this is because 1 Esdras compared with Ezra-Nehemiah does not appear to be a study of comparable works. Secondly, it is because the work of 1 Esdras is probably a later work, loosely based on Ezra-Nehemiah, rather than an older more historically accurate work.

2. Other Apocryphal References

Other apocryphal writings also record the activity of Ezra and Nehemiah independently of each other. They refer to one or the other reformer, but none of them reports the work of both concurrently.

i. Ecclesiasticus

Ecclesiasticus (The Wisdom of Jesus Ben Sira) 49v13, says

"Of Nehemiah the memorial is great; who raised up for us the walls that were fallen, and set up the gates and bars, and raised up our homes again."

There is no mention of Ezra, or his work within the book. Ecclesiasticus therefore takes the opposite stance to that of 1 Esdras, which focuses upon Ezra to the exclusion of Nehemiah. This has been taken²⁹¹ to suggest that the reputation of Ezra relies as much on the literary work, as upon his actual historical success.²⁹²

This focus on Nehemiah alone is probably for a theological purpose within Ecclesiasticus. The author (of Ecclesiasticus) focused on the Hasmonean era where the significance of a political governor was emphasised. The revolution of the Jews at that time was as much a

²⁸⁹ R.J.Coggins and M.A.Knibb *The First and Second Books of Esdras* 5

²⁹⁰ H.G.M.Williamson *Israel In The Books Of Chronicles* 20

²⁹¹ J.A.Emerton 'Did Ezra go to Jerusalem in 428 B.C.?' *JTS* 184-85

²⁹² H.G.M.Williamson *Ezra, Nehemiah* xlvi

political action as it was religious. Blenkinsopp²⁹³ suggests concerning the author of Ecclesiasticus,

"His book concludes with an encomium of the great figures of Israel's history, towards the end of which he makes honourable mention of Zerubbabel, Jeshua, and Nehemiah but passes over Ezra in silence ... The most probable explanation therefore, is that the omission was deliberate and polemical"

As noted above, Blenkinsopp²⁹⁴ however, sees the work of 1 Esdras as being from the Pharisaic school, which promoted the office of scribe rather than political appointee.

The emphasis on Nehemiah within Ecclesiasticus appears to be for theological reasons, as was the author's emphasis on Ezra in 1 Esdras. Therefore the absence of reference to the other reformer bears no weight in a discussion based on chronological order.

ii 2 Maccabees

The emphasis of Ecclesiasticus occurs again in 2 Maccabees 1:18-2:13 (again from the Hasmonean era), where Nehemiah becomes all important. This is to the point where the work records Nehemiah as building the Temple (which historically he could not have done). This work again therefore appears to report on Nehemiah's work exclusively, for theological rather than historical reasons, even to the point where historical situations are altered to present the theological purpose.

Conclusion

On first appearances, the apocryphal works suggest that Ezra and Nehemiah did not work contemporaneously, for they uniformly separate the two reformers. As Nehemiah is known to have come to Jerusalem in 445 BCE, the one obvious conclusion from this information alone would be that Ezra arrived at a different period altogether, namely 398 BCE, when there could be no suggestion of contemporaneity. This conclusion is because the apocryphal works relate only one reformer, either Ezra or Nehemiah, as the key figure in the restoration of Israel at any one time. However, there are several flaws in this reasoning.

Firstly, the details of the accounts in the apocryphal works do not always accurately record the actual events in history (as in the case of 2 Maccabees), but represent the hero doing things that are historically impossible. Such an approach to reporting, means that historically based suggestions cannot be supported from the work.

²⁹³J. Blenkinsopp *Ezra-Nehemiah* 55

²⁹⁴J. Blenkinsopp *Ezra-Nehemiah* 57

Secondly, when the authors compiled the apocryphal books considered here, they reflected their own purposes in the presentation of the narrative. The historiography of the apocryphal works, parallels what the author of Ezra-Nehemiah did with his own different agenda. If this is the case then the evidence of the Apocrypha has no bearing on the ordering of the arrival of Ezra and Nehemiah in Jerusalem. This is because the editors of the apocryphal works had particular interests that specifically excluded one or other of the reformers. Therefore there is no significance for the contemporaneity of Ezra and Nehemiah, in the fact that the books of the Apocrypha do not show the two reformers as contemporaries.

SECTION B

Josephus

There are several references in the works of Josephus that have implications for the date of the work of Ezra and Nehemiah. Firstly, in Josephus' history, Ezra and Nehemiah do not appear as contemporaries. Secondly, Josephus suggests that the reformers worked in the reign of Emperor Xerxes. Thirdly, there are references to individuals that might be correlated with the Elephantine papyri, and canonical texts. These include references to Joiakim the High Priest, and Bagoses. These issues are discussed below.

1. The reign of Xerxes

Josephus says that both Ezra and Nehemiah flourished in the reign of Xerxes (*Antiquities* I v, part 1 and part 6 respectively). It would appear from the context that Josephus was referring to Xerxes I. This implies that both reformers belong to the period 486-465 BCE. All authorities consider this period too early for either Ezra's or Nehemiah's arrival in Jerusalem. Therefore the reference to Xerxes I is a factual error within his work. The presence of this error naturally casts doubt over his whole dating structure for that period.

Batten²⁹⁵ however proposes a different hypothesis, namely that Josephus was referring to Xerxes II 425-424 BCE. He concludes from this that

"As Josephus follows his sources pretty closely, it is perfectly possible that the date of Ezra in the original text of Esdras was the reign of Xerxes, and that Artaxerxes is one of the many modifications in that text based on the MT."

Batten's date for Ezra (428 BCE based on the 37th year of Artaxerxes I) is within the parameters for the arrival of Ezra considered in the thesis. However, the date for Nehemiah's return becomes impossible, following the conclusions of Chapter 3 section A. There is no possibility that Nehemiah could have come as late as the reign of Xerxes II which Batten's theory would require it. So today, this theory has little credence.

Blenkinsopp²⁹⁶ suggests the reason for Josephus' mistake

"This impossible chronology ... resulted from a praiseworthy but misguided attempt to arrange the Persian kings in their correct order."

2. The Accuracy of Josephus' Record

Josephus does not see Ezra and Nehemiah as contemporaries. He relates the work of Ezra in a narrative concluded by his death. Josephus then deals quite separately with

²⁹⁵L.W.Batten *Ezra and Nehemiah* 29

²⁹⁶J. Blenkinsopp *Ezra-Nehemiah* 58

Nehemiah's administration (Antiquities X1, 5, 6-8) treating the men separately and independently. This separation by Josephus paralleled by the similar separation seen in the works of the apocrypha adds further support to the theory that the two reformers were not contemporaneous.

i. Josephus' Source

If Josephus used 1 Esdras as his source document,²⁹⁷ when drawing up his history of Ezra, then the conclusions noted about 1 Esdras need to be reconsidered. The previous section noted that the absence of Nehemiah from 1 Esdras did not necessarily suggest that Ezra and Nehemiah were not contemporaneous. Instead it suggested that 1 Esdras omitted reference to the activity of Nehemiah for a theological purpose. If Josephus used that document as a source for his compilation of the Ezra part of his history, then the separation of the activity of Ezra and Nehemiah in Josephus is merely a reflection of the same underlying agenda as 1 Esdras.

Williamson²⁹⁸ considers it certain that Josephus had a source document giving a correct order for the Persian kings down to Artaxerxes I. Williamson feels that Josephus used this list to 'correct' the text of Ezra 4. However, in so doing, Josephus caused difficulties in his account. Williamson²⁹⁹ suggests

"Josephus' corrections, therefore, which rest from one point of view on an accurate historical knowledge, result in the end in unhistorical confusion."

Therefore it is unsafe to place great significance on the historical framework of Josephus' work in this period.

ii. The Place of Nehemiah 8-10

In one sentence in Antiquities XI 5.8 Josephus refers firstly to Nehemiah 7:4 (the scarcity of population in Jerusalem), and secondly to Nehemiah 11:1 (the measures taken by the leaders to rectify it). Josephus evidently considered the events recorded in the two verses to be very closely linked, as he refers to them in the same sentence. It appears that for Josephus; Nehemiah 8-10 did not intervene between the two references. This suggests that Nehemiah 7:4 immediately preceded Nehemiah 11:1 in Josephus' Greek source document. This means that Nehemiah 8-10 (with the references to combined activity) would appear to have been absent from Josephus' source. This in turn lends support to

²⁹⁷H.G.M.Williamson *Israel in the Books of Chronicles* 22-23

L.W.Batten *Ezra and Nehemiah* 29

²⁹⁸ H.G.M.Williamson 'The Historical Value of Josephus' *Jewish Antiquities* xl 297-301 *JTS* 49-66

²⁹⁹ H.G.M.Williamson 'The Historical Value of Josephus' *Jewish Antiquities* xl 297-301 *JTS* 50

the contention that Nehemiah 8-10 belongs to the book of Ezra, which casts further doubt on the references in Nehemiah 8 to any joint activity of the two reformers.

However, Williamson³⁰⁰ argues that the context of 1 Esdras 9:37 (Josephus' Greek source) makes it clear that the author of 1 Esdras was using a document in which Nehemiah 8 (Ezra's reforms) followed Nehemiah 7 (the returning Israelites) not Ezra 8 or 10 (similar passages of Ezra's reforms). Therefore on this basis, it would be a mistake to draw from conclusions on the non-contemporaneity of the two reformers, that he edited his sources for theological reasons. This discussion is a separate issue beyond the scope of this thesis. Williamson's work remains the standard position here, and so will be used in the thesis. Gilkey³⁰¹ also considers this when he notes that

"Josephus did not reproduce his source literally but dealt with it freely, omitting tedious parts at will (cf. Ezra 2:1- 67) and "correcting" his text as it pleased him. He corrects the impossible order of the Persian kings in 1 Esdras, which actually reverses the historical sequence"

This apparent indication of totally independent activity by Ezra and Nehemiah may not be realistic. Instead this may be the result of editorial policy. As in section A, it is unreasonable to conclude that Ezra came at a different time to Nehemiah because Josephus deals with Ezra first in his account. The work of Josephus cannot add to the debate over the contemporaneity of the two reformers, any more than the apocryphal works can. Though they all deal with Ezra and Nehemiah separately, there is evidence that they do so for reasons of editorial policy. There is certainly no evidence that they wrote a more chronologically accurate account than the document Ezra-Nehemiah.

3. References to Other Individuals

i. Joiakim

Josephus records that Ezra died at around the same time as Joacim (Joiakim) the High Priest.³⁰² Joiakim was the son of Jeshua (Nehemiah 12:10). The identity of the High Priest has already been considered in chapter 3 section E. There Joiakim was shown to be the predecessor of Eliashib, the High Priest in the time of Nehemiah. Josephus' reference if correct would place Ezra as coming shortly before Nehemiah (depending on Joiakim's dates). This indicates a date of 458 BCE for Ezra's arrival. However the canonical books say nothing of the death of either Ezra, or Joiakim. If Joiakim survived for a long time after the beginning of Eliashib's reign as High Priest, then Ezra's coming to Jerusalem in 438 BCE is just possible. The one date for Ezra's arrival that this reference excludes quite

³⁰⁰H.G.M.Williamson *Israel in the Books of Chronicles* 32-35

³⁰¹C.W.Gilkey *The Interpreters Bible* 561

³⁰²Josephus 'Antiquities of the Jews' *Works* xi v 5

specifically, is a date of 398 BCE, for Joiakim comes before Eliashib, who was High Priest in the time of Nehemiah (Nehemiah 13:28). It is unreasonable to assume that Joiakim, (even if the immediate predecessor to Nehemiah's Eliashib),³⁰³ could still be alive in 398. This is because he had presumably died, thus allowing Eliashib into the office of High Priest by 445 BCE.

ii. Bagoses

Josephus also refers to Bagoses, who is usually linked to Bagohi known to be a governor in 408 BCE from the Elephantine papyri³⁰⁴. This connection is significant as it dates Josephus' reference to the time of Artaxerxes II, which then helps with a reference to Ιωάννης (see chapter 3 section E). However, Williamson contests the identification above, noting firstly that Bagoses was a common Persian (rather than Jewish) name. Secondly, the description of him as 'στρατηγός' does not match the Elephantine title of *ḥb* which is attributed to the Elephantine Bagohi. Williamson notes³⁰⁵

"he was the στρατηγός of Artaxerxes, and it was implied that he was a Persian (*Ant.* xi. 300). This title clearly refers to military rank ... in the LXX it is words such as σατραπης, τοπαρχης, and 'απαρχος".

This leads to the identification of Bagoses with the Persian general of that name who served Artaxerxes III (358-338 BCE), rather than with a Jewish governor under Darius II. Indeed, Williamson³⁰⁶ goes on to consider that Josephus was confused, in presenting Artaxerxes II, and III as being the same monarch.

"The previous context of *Ant.* xi dealt with the story of Esther, which Josephus places in the reign of Artaxerxes I (465-424 BC), so that the use of this word 'ἄλλος would imply that he did not distinguish between Artaxerxes II and III. Thus not only is his reference ambiguous, but it is more likely to be misleading."

The reference in Josephus may be to the same person as the Elephantine Bagohi, if we assume the existence of a Persian official of the time of Artaxerxes II. However, considerable doubt attends the historical location of Josephus' testimony. The reference could equally (if not more likely) belong to a Persian belonging to the reign of Artaxerxes III, and therefore have no link with the Bagohi of the Elephantine papyrus.

³⁰³and Cross' reconstruction in chapter three section E (*JBL* 94 (1975) 17) places him further away than this

³⁰⁴ H.G.M. Williamson 'The Historical Value of Josephus' *Jewish Antiquities* xl 297-301 *JTS* 60

³⁰⁵ H.G.M. Williamson 'The Historical Value of Josephus' *Jewish Antiquities* xl 297-301 *JTS* 58

³⁰⁶ H.G.M. Williamson 'The Historical Value of Josephus' *Jewish Antiquities* xl 297-301 *JTS* 58

iii. Johanan

Josephus refers to Ιωαννης and states that he murdered his brother in the Temple (Antiquities xi,vii 1). This account has been considered above in chapter 3 section E. Saley³⁰⁷ suggests that

“Josephus is guilty of constructing a series of totally untrustworthy episodes from a tortured understanding of the book of Nehemiah. He has placed Sanballat a century too late and under the wrong monarch(s)”.

Josephus presents the story in a period apparently matching that of Johanan, in the reign of Artaxerxes II, coming after the Ezra-Nehemiah accounts, then the Esther accounts, but before the account of Alexander. He has condensed the reigns of Artaxerxes II and III together, and this narrative comes towards the end of his treatment of the period. This Ιωαννης therefore may well belong to the reign of Artaxerxes III, as we saw Bagoas might also have done. Therefore Josephus' testimony here is not relevant for the discussion of the date of Ezra's arrival in Jerusalem.

Conclusion

Some of the details in Josephus' record are undoubtedly incorrect, and he appears confused about the order, and even number of the Persian kings. There is accordingly reasonable doubt as to the accuracy of the detail in the rest of his historical reporting. Josephus therefore is able to add little to the debate.

³⁰⁷ R.J.Saley 'The Date of Nehemiah Reconsidered' *Essays* 152

SECTION C

The Elephantine Papyri

The Elephantine Papyri are a collection of records of a former Jewish colony from near Aswan in Egypt. They include a number of fragments of records, and copies of letters from the colony. The whole collection dates to around 400 BCE though the date of individual letters varies within a few years, back to 420 BCE. The collection contains several Papyri that relate to the period relevant to this study, and these are noted below.

1. Papyrus 1 (Pritchard 'The Passover Papyrus' 491, Cowley 21, Sachau 6)

The first papyrus to consider is referred to as 'the Passover Papyrus'. This papyrus is dated at 419 BCE. It marks an attempt to pass and enforce Jewish law relating to the feast of Unleavened Bread and the Passover in the Jewish community of Elephantine in Egypt.

Written in Imperial Aramaic, it is a message from King Darius II of Persia, sent in his 5th year (419 BCE) to Arsames the Governor of Egypt (Satrap from 455 BCE to at least 407 BCE). It contained instructions and authorisation to permit the celebration of the feast of unleavened bread, by the Jewish garrison in Elephantine. Therefore we know that by 419 BCE the Passover festival was definitely celebrated in Egypt. By this date the Jewish community in Judah had been established for over 100 years. The existence of the Passover celebration in an outpost such as Elephantine, suggests that Judah already practised the ritual. This is because it is difficult to consider that the outlying provinces should be more developed in their rituals and theology than the capital of the religion, Jerusalem. The community was based round an ancient Egyptian outpost. During the 6thC. it was garrisoned by Syrian and Jewish troops, whose families remained there until around 400 BCE.³⁰⁸ This was not an ancient Jewish community with roots stretching back to antiquity who might have been able to preserve some memories and traditions, and so it is reasonable to suppose that the practices they followed came from external sources.

The existence of this community might suggest that Ezra had already arrived in Jerusalem. This is because the restoration and regulation of the Law governing religious life is considered to be part of Ezra's work,³⁰⁹ and the celebration of the Passover is required by Jewish law (Exodus 12:43 ff.). The major reform of religious life in Elephantine indicated by this papyrus is more likely to be an indirect result of Ezra's work in restoring the Passover festival to Jerusalem. Given the particular nature of the community, it is unlikely to suppose that provincial Elephantine was closer to the Jewish Law and seeking

³⁰⁸A. Millard *Treasures From Bible Times* 148-149

³⁰⁹D. J. A. Clines *Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther* 103

to be obedient to it, while the religious capital Jerusalem was still in ignorance of it. Bright³¹⁰ also considers that it is unlikely that

"Jewish practice was being regulated in a far corner of Egypt - and perhaps via Jerusalem - before this had been done in Jerusalem itself."

If Ezra's arrival was in 398 BCE, and if the correct regulation of the Passover relied on his reforms, then the Jews in the exiled community in Elephantine in 419 appear to be closer to the Priestly Law than Jerusalem. Such a position, while possible is to be considered unlikely, rendering the 398 BCE date for Ezra's arrival as unlikely.

This papyrus then may indicate an earlier date for Ezra, but all that is certain is that the Jews in Egypt were celebrating Passover in 419 BC. Ezra's identification with this event is only hypothetical. Williamson³¹¹ also concludes this when he says that

"the Passover Papyri cannot support a late date for Ezra; one interpretation of it may favour an early date, but this is very far from certain."

2. Papyrus 2 (Pritchard 'Contributions to the Cult of Yaho' 491, Cowley 22, Sachau 17-19)

This papyrus contains a list of contributors to the Cult of Yaho (a possibly syncretistic derivative of Yahweh) from the Jewish Garrison at Elephantine. This indicates that there was a lively Jewish based religion operating in Egypt around 410-400 BCE.

This is significant to the relative ordering of Ezra-Nehemiah as again, it would seem unlikely that there could be an active religious group in Egypt, if Jerusalem itself was awaiting the coming of Ezra (in 398) to reintroduce the Law of Moses to the people. Therefore Ezra must have arrived in Jerusalem, and completed his work before the writing of this papyrus (410-400 BCE).

However, this papyrus nowhere implies that these people were following the Jewish law closely. There is no suggestion here that they knew more of the Law than did the people of Israel under Zerubbabel. Indeed, the name of God mentioned in the papyrus (Yaho) implies that they were syncretistic, or were carrying out an old form of Judaism, which may have preceded Ezra's work.

Therefore this papyrus offers no real contribution to the debate over the dating of Ezra and Nehemiah.

³¹⁰J. Bright *History Of Israel* 400

³¹¹H. G. M. Williamson *Ezra, Nehemiah* xlii

3. Papyrus 3 (Pritchard 'Petition for the Authorisation to Rebuild the Temple of Yaho' 491, Cowley 30, Sachau 1-2)

This papyrus is a petition to the Governor of Judah ('To our lord Bagoas') relating to the rebuilding of the Temple at Elephantine. The papyrus was written to Bagoas in the 17th year of Darius II (407 BCE). Yedoniah wrote it as an appeal to Jerusalem for assistance in rebuilding the local Temple, which the Egyptians had destroyed during persecution when Arsames was out of the country. The papyrus adds³¹²

"If it please our Lord, take thought of this Temple to rebuild it, since they do not let us rebuild it. Look to your well wishers and friends here in Egypt. Let a letter be sent from you to them concerning the Temple of the god Yaho (25) to build it in the fortress of Elephantine as it was built before".

The governor of Samaria³¹³ also received a copy of the letter. This implies that there was a government in Jerusalem that was already the recognised authority in Judaism by 407 BCE (the date of the papyrus). This government must also have been a potential source of funds in order for them to receive this letter. This in turn means that Jerusalem must have already become financially viable, and established in the law of Moses by 407 BCE or else it could not have become an authority for appeal.

This implies that Ezra came before 407 BCE or else there would have been no point in his coming to Jerusalem at all. This is because by that time the city authorities were already regarded as the spiritual authority in Judaism. This papyrus therefore points to a date for Ezra earlier than 398 BCE.

4. Papyrus 4 (Pritchard 'Advice of the Governors of Judah and Samaria to the Jews of Elephantine' 492, Cowley 32, Sachau 4)

This papyrus is not actually formal correspondence, but rather, according to Pritchard³¹⁴ a "Memorandum of what Bagoas and Delaiah said"

As was noted above, a letter was sent to the governor of Jerusalem relating to the rebuilding of the Elephantine Temple, which received a verbal reply. This papyrus is a memo relating to that reply. The reply entreated Arsames to authorise the rebuilding of the temple in Elephantine. This papyrus also refers to a letter that Yedoniah wrote 3 years earlier (in the 14th year of Darius II - 410 BCE) to the High Priest Johanan. It seems that Johanan did not reply to his satisfaction, as 3 years later Yedoniah was writing to the Governors directly.

³¹²J.B. Pritchard *ANET* 492

³¹³Delaiah and Shelemiah the sons of Sanballat

³¹⁴J.B. Pritchard *ANET* 492

This Johanan according to Pritchard³¹⁵

"Is no doubt the Johanan of Nehemiah 12:22-23 "

This papyrus therefore gives a date for Bagoas and Johanan, which appears to confirm the date of Nehemiah's governorship in 444 BCE. This has important implications, which have already been considered in chapter 3 section A.

Conclusion

A date reference for the time of Nehemiah arises out of the Elephantine Papyri. This is significant as noted in chapter two.

However, there are no strong inferences relating to Ezra's arrival in Jerusalem that arise out of the other texts. Some of the papyri suggest a date before 398 BCE, but either 458 428 BCE remain possible, and so the fundamental issue over 'who came first' is still unresolved.

³¹⁵J.B. Pritchard *ANET* 492 fn.15

SECTION D

The Failed Prophecy Of Haggai

In this, and the remaining sections of the chapter, the events of the text of Ezra-Nehemiah are examined, against known external conditions, to establish a dating reference.

The prophecy in Haggai 2:1-9 is often referred to as a 'failed prophecy'. This is because it makes two specific predictions relating to the dating of Ezra and Nehemiah. This section considers the implications that these two predictions might have for the dates of Ezra and Nehemiah's arrival in Jerusalem.

1. The Prophecies

The prophecy of Persia's fall

Haggai prophesied that Persia would fall, and that a new Jewish state would rise from the ashes, apparently sometime late in the 520's BCE. As no new Jewish state rose, Haggai appears to have been in error. The distress caused by this failed prophecy is thought³¹⁶ to have led to a long term discouragement within the proponents of the Judaistic religion.

ii. The prophecy concerning the new Temple

The second part of the prophecy in 2:9 suggests that the glory of the new Temple would be greater than that of the former, and it would be the site where peace could be obtained. The Temple recorded in Ezra 6 was physically not as glorious as the former (Solomonic) Temple, and so the prophecy again appears a failure.

2. The Impact Of These Prophecies.

Haggai's prophecy was understandably an initial spur to an enthusiastic rebuilding of Jerusalem. Indeed, as the book of Ezra records,³¹⁷ the Temple was quickly rebuilt under the impetus of these prophecies. Then as time progressed, Darius I gained the throne, and as the Samaritans made things more difficult, enthusiasm within Judaism waned.

"This shift of interest left the little priestly state of Judah unable for three generations greatly to influence currents of Jewish life in other parts of the world." (Albright)³¹⁸

Thus, as a result, Albright suggests that Ezra could not have come to Jerusalem and completed his work, until this 'failed Prophecy' was forgotten. Haggai's prophecy is usually

³¹⁶W.F.Albright *The Biblical Period From Abraham To Ezra* 88

³¹⁷Ezra Chapter 6 verses 14-15

³¹⁸W.F.Albright *The Biblical Period From Abraham To Ezra* 88

dated to 520 BCE. Albright considers that the traditional date for Ezra's arrival in 458 BCE does not allow sufficient time for this prophecy to be forgotten. This is because only 60 years (a single generation) separates the prophecy from 458 BCE. The later dates of 428, or 398 BCE for Ezra's arrival are considered preferable to give more time for the failed prophecy to be forgotten.

However, from Jewish tradition, there is no perception that Haggai was mistaken, or that his work was rejected. Indeed, it became regarded as canonical, forming an undisputed part of the work of the minor prophets. Coggins³¹⁹ notes

"we should be cautious about assuming that they were simply mistaken: had that been so, it is scarcely likely that their words would have been treasured and preserved and shaped into the books which we now have. In some sense at least these men were perceived as having carried out a true prophetic role."

nally Haggai's prophecy may not be intended to be understood in a time specific way at all. The only time reference within the prophecy being "once more (it is a little while)"³²⁰ This is too vague to produce a sense of expectation and immediate fulfilment.

Conclusion

There is no real suggestion from Haggai, or subsequent history, that this prophecy or the prophet himself was ever perceived as a failure. Therefore the fundamental presupposition in this section is suspect. Consequently, the suggestion that Ezra had to have come after the failed prophecy be forgotten, is also invalid. The 'failed prophecy of Haggai' can have no real bearing on the temporal ordering of the two reformers. Any of the dates are quite possible, and there are no indications for any particular position.

³¹⁹R.J.Coggins *Haggai Zechariah Malachi* 15

³²⁰Author's translation of part of Haggai 2:6

SECTION E

The Changing Persian Attitude To Resettlement

The Persian Empire was a changing political entity, with different policies throughout its time of influence. In some periods of its power it actively pursued resettlement policies for its conquered territories, while at other times the outlying districts were of little interest, due to internal disputes. The pattern of imperial behaviour towards these provinces could form a chronological framework, against which the period of Ezra and Nehemiah might be evaluated. In this section, consideration will be given to Persian policy in general terms. Section G will specifically consider this policy concerning Israel.

Hoglund³²¹ argues that within the first half of the Achaemenid rule Imperial policy was to encourage local law to develop within its subject provinces. He considers that the early Achaemenids knew of no law code flexible enough for the whole empire. Therefore they allowed each part to follow its own local law in so far as it did not clash with official Persian policy. This attitude is further evidenced by Darius' response to Pharaoh in 519 BCE³²². Kellermann argued that this policy began to change by the reign of Darius I, and so the mission of Ezra and Nehemiah may have been one of the last examples of such policy in action. He therefore considers it unlikely that Ezra arrived in Jerusalem in 398 BCE in the second half of the Persian period. This is because he views the beginning of Artaxerxes II's reign (398 being the 7th year of that reign) to be

"the crucial turning point in this regard."³²³

1. Evidence For This Policy

This pattern of foreign policy therefore needs consideration.

The establishment of home rule was definitely the policy of Cyrus as illustrated by the return of Zerubbabel. Other Emperors also continued this policy in the Empire. According to Kuhrt³²⁴

"Cambyses 'the tyrant' also restored cultic order in the temple of Neith in Sais"³²⁵

³²¹K.Hoglund 'Achaemenid Imperial Administration in Syria-Palestine and the Mission of Ezra and Nehemiah' *SBL Dissertation Series* 63

³²² H.G.M.Williamson *Ezra, Nehemiah* 104-105

³²³ H.G.M.Williamson *Ezra, Nehemiah* xlii

³²⁴A. Kuhrt 'The Cyrus Cylinder and Achaemenid Imperial Policy' *JSOT* 94

This is definitely the same policy, and goes further than mere reinstatement of the populace, it also demonstrates a sympathy for local religion, and for the rule of local law.

Darius I also evidently followed this policy towards the conquered territories. There are several historical allusions to his cultivation of foreign religions. Fensham³²⁶ notes that

"He had an interest in particulars about certain cultic practices and prescribed minute detail perhaps ... in order not to anger a specific god"

Darius it seems was keen to solicit the favour of all the gods he could, a practice that was not so observable in the second half of the reign of the Persian Empire. Keller³²⁷ says of the Aramaic correspondence in Ezra 5:6-6:12 which relates to the periods of Darius and Artaxerxes I

"There is no longer any doubt as to the historicity of these documents. Numerous contemporary texts of a different type indicate how zealously Darius I promoted religion in every way, just as his predecessor had done, not only in Palestine but also in Asia Minor and Egypt. For example the inscription of Usahor, an Egyptian Doctor, runs as follows: 'King Darius - may He live forever - commanded me to go to Egypt ... and make up once more the number of the holy scribes of the temple and bring new life into what had fallen into decay'".

Kuhrt³²⁸ says that

"Achaemenid rulers appear to have been anxious to maintain the privileges of cultic communities as evidenced for example, by the letter from Darius to Gadates concerning the workers in the sacred grove of Apollo".

2. Possible Dates For A Change Of Policy

Later periods of Persian history definitely demonstrate a different attitude. By the time of Artaxerxes II, policy had changed. The policy by that time was one of repression, and punishment, rather than support and tolerance. Yamauchi³²⁹ comments on this when he notes that

"the political situation in Palestine in 398 would have made Ezra's mission most unlikely. When Johanan the high Priest, killed his brother (Josephus *Antiquities* XI 297-301), the Persian governor Bagoas imposed a penalty upon Jerusalem for seven years."

³²⁵ Dr Kuhrt calls this to attention in considering the naophorus statue of Udjahorresne in the Vatican; translation of text in M. Lichtheim, *Ancient Egyptian Literature II* (1980) 38 Section Ib).

³²⁶C.Fensham *The Books of Ezra and Nehemiah* 90

³²⁷W.Keller *The Bible as History* 306

³²⁸A.Kuhrt 'The Cyrus Cylinder and Achaemenid Imperial Policy' *JSOT* 94

³²⁹E.M.Yamauchi 'The Reverse Order Of Ezra-Nehemiah Reconsidered' *Themelios*12

This points to a different policy that was characteristic of the second half of the Persian period, shown by a harsher repressive treatment of the subject peoples. Reicke³³⁰ notes that

"This temple crisis under Bagoas can simply not be squared with Ezra's mission to restore the Temple, supported juridically and monetarily by the Persian throne (Ezra 7:6, 11-28)."

Therefore the Imperial attitude towards these outlying provinces had apparently changed, by the period of Artaxerxes II.

The Persian attitude towards the returning exiles in Ezra-Nehemiah therefore fits the context of the first, not the second period of the Persian Empire. This contention strongly points against Ezra's arrival in the reign of Artaxerxes II, in the second period of the Empire, and therefore against a 398 BCE date for Ezra's arrival in Jerusalem.

However, the Xanthos trilingual inscription also illustrates this policy, but within the time of Artaxerxes II. It relates to the area of Lycia in modern Turkey, an area in dispute between the Persians, and the rising Greek power. The Kingdom based around Xanthos, from the dates on coinage and other inscriptions may date at least as far back as 520 BCE. Bryce³³¹ suggests that

"The Persians may have been largely responsible for the establishment (or at least the endorsement) of a ruling dynasty in Xanthos which came to exercise authority through much of central and western Lycia until early in the 4th century BC".

Bryce adds³³²

"the Xanthos stele inscription clearly indicates the resumption of a Lycian-Persian alliance during the last decades of the 5th century."

If this example can be dated to the time of Artaxerxes II, then the suggestion that the policy changed in his time is uncertain. However, Bryce is unable to be certain about the dating of the instigation of the policy, due to a lack of knowledge of the people. He does suggest however, that the policy was implemented before the reign of Artaxerxes II when he comments³³³

Lycia's close ties to Persia in the early decades of the 5th century are reflected in the Lycian contribution of 50 ships to Xerxes' armada".

³³⁰B.Reicke *The New Testament Era* 16

³³¹T.R.Bryce J.Zahle *The Lycians in Literary and Epigraphic Sources* 101

³³²T.R.Bryce J.Zahle *The Lycians in Literary and Epigraphic Sources* 101

³³³T.R.Bryce J.Zahle *The Lycians in Literary and Epigraphic Sources* 103

Byrce presumably refers there to Xerxes II (425-424 BCE). His reference to the 'early decades of the 5th century' also imply a date before Artaxerxes II (405-359 BCE). Therefore it appears that the policy was in place before the reign of Artaxerxes which might still be considered as a watershed of policy. The favourable policy continues there in operation, as it did in Judah, due to the political necessities of the moment, and inertia. New policies were being shaped rather differently, considering Yamauchi's comment above..

3. The Motives For The Policy

Persia in the fifth century was having difficulties at the western end of its empire. The Greeks in alliance with the Egyptians had been in rebellion (460 BCE), which was followed by internal rebellion by Megabyzos in 448 BCE. Hoglund³³⁴ considers that these are significant in explaining the Persian attitude towards provinces in this part of the empire.

"the Egyptian Revolt of the mid-fifth century BCE and the Megabyzos Revolt that allegedly followed in its aftermath ... must have demonstrated how valuable it would be to the Persians to have a loyal province and reliable governor in the territory bordering on Egypt."

He adds later³³⁵

"it was a struggle for control of the eastern Mediterranean, including the Levantine coast."

Such political difficulties may explain the Persian attitude in the fifth century. The reversal of policy in the second half of the period would then be attributable to a more stable political position for Persia. However, Kuhrt³³⁶ has discovered that

"A much later reference in a Babylonian text dating to Artaxerxes III lists deportees, including women, arriving in Babylon after the revolt of Sidon".

This text relating to Artaxerxes III bears a date of 359-338 BCE. So if indeed policy did change in the time of Artaxerxes II towards a less sympathetic policy towards its provinces, it had reversed again by the time of Artaxerxes III, some 40 years later.

Conclusion

Kellermann proposed that Ezra could not have arrived in Jerusalem in the reign of Artaxerxes II, as such relocation policies were not practised that late in the Empire's history. The actions of the Persians towards Ezra are however, typical of the first half of

³³⁴K.Hoglund *Achaemenid Imperial Administration in Syria-Palestine and the Missions of Ezra and Nehemiah* 88

³³⁵ K.Hoglund *Achaemenid Imperial Administration in Syria-Palestine and the Missions of Ezra and Nehemiah* 242

³³⁶A.Kuhrt 'The Cyrus Cylinder and Achaemenid Imperial Policy' *JSOT* 94

the Persian period, and parallel to events seen in the reign of Darius I. This appears to imply that Ezra came in the reign of Artaxerxes I. However, time definitions of the order of 'the second half of the Persian period' are too vague to be decisive. No definitive date can be given for a reversal of this policy, if indeed it was ever formally reversed. There is an example from some point in the reign of Artaxerxes II, which mitigates against Ezra's arrival in his reign. However, that is a single example, and cannot be held as indicative of a major official policy change.

This suggests that the 458 and 428 dates are more likely than a 398 BCE date, though the evidence against 398 is not particularly strong.

SECTION F

Historical References In The Book Of Ezra

Continuing from the previous section, which discussed the Imperial Policy of Persia, it is now necessary to also discuss imperial Policy concerning Israel specifically.

A date in 398 BCE for Ezra's arrival in Jerusalem (with the recent defection of Egypt from the Persian Empire) makes the Imperial policy of encouraging Ezra understandable. The idea of Artaxerxes II having an admittedly small, but loyal people establishing themselves between himself as Persian Emperor and Egypt, makes good political sense. This policy produced a valuable buffer state between the Empire and Egypt, for a comparatively small price. Williamson³³⁷ confirms that

"the Empire passed through troubled times at the turn of the century. In 401 BC Egypt again rebelled, and this time she regained her independence. Artaxerxes II was then faced with several years of revolt led by his brother Cyrus."

Therefore it seems more probable that the socio-political situation reflected in the book of Ezra shows that Ezra has to have travelled to Jerusalem in 398 BCE.

Pavlovsky³³⁸ adds a further element to this debate, when he says that in the year 459/458 BCE the King (Artaxerxes I) sent a 300,000 man army against Egypt. He contends that the roads were so filled with troop caravans, that there was no room for Ezra's caravan. Therefore he concludes that Ezra would not have been able to come to Jerusalem in the year 458 BCE due to congestion on the roads.

While it would indeed have been difficult to travel at this time, there is not really any reason to suppose that the army monopolised the whole route for the entire year in its travels. Pavlovsky's historical reference to the 300 000 man army is significant however; for it shows that the Persian Empire had every reason to reinforce its borders with Egypt in 458 BCE. Therefore the Socio-political situation provides a reason for Imperial policy to be favourable to Ezra's request, as it does in 398 BCE. Indeed, due to spreading rebellion, the period 459-448 BCE was very turbulent, and it would be reasonable to assume that Persians would welcome a sympathetic leader in Jerusalem. Hoglund³³⁹ goes

³³⁷H.G.M. Williamson *Ezra and Nehemiah* 58

³³⁸V. Pavlovsky *Die Chronologie Der Taätigkeit Esdras* Bib 38 1957 284-285 [footnote taken from E.M. Yamauchi 'The Reverse Order Of Ezra-Nehemiah Reconsidered' *Themelios* 12]

³³⁹K. Hoglund *Achaemenid Imperial Administration in Syria-Palestine and the Missions of Ezra and Nehemiah* 242

further, suggesting that it explained the Persian's favourable attitude towards the province. Blenkinsopp³⁴⁰ suggests that

"Ezra's mission in 458 BC coincides with one of the gravest crises at the western end of the empire, and therefore it could be interpreted as an attempt on the part of the central government to assure stability in an area which was, in the circumstances of those years, strategically crucial."

The historical background of Artaxerxes' decree is therefore likely to reflect either the 458, or 398 BCE dates.

Conclusion

The details from the narrative fit well into the reign of either Artaxerxes, and there is no hint at all as to the relative timing of the arrival of Ezra and Nehemiah. The socio-political background during the seventh year of both Artaxerxes I and II, was similar, both periods requiring reinforcement of the western border area of the Persian Empire from Egyptian depredations, and internal rebellion.

The one period for Ezra's arrival that perhaps fits the data least well here is 428 BCE. By that date Egypt had not yet gained independence, but the rebellion by Megabyzos was finished. This is therefore the least likely time for Artaxerxes to be favourable to Ezra's request. The situation in that period least reflects what is seen in the work of Ezra-Nehemiah.

³⁴⁰J. Blenkinsopp *Ezra-Nehemiah* 65

SECTION G

The Absence Of A Governor Upon Ezra's Arrival In Jerusalem

The Persian Empire was divided into Satrapies; Judah was under the authority of 'the province-beyond-the-river'. Tattenai for example, was the Satrap for the area in the time of Zerubbabel (Ezra 5.3). The province was further subdivided into governor-ships for more local control. These local governors included Sanballat of Samaria, Tobiah, an official from Ammon (Nehemiah 2.10) and Geshem King of the Arabian tribe of Qedar (Nehemiah 6.1). The Satrapy of 'the province-beyond-the-river' was in overall local control of all these governors, and ultimately the Emperor.

1. The Pattern Of Governorship Within Ezra-Nehemiah

The book of Ezra implies that Ezra came to Judah at a time when there was no governor in the land. There are three such indicators. Firstly the actions that Ezra took within Judah suggest this; he was given power to appoint magistrates and justices (Ezra 7:25). Secondly, within the Ezra memoir, there is no official recognition of any governor. Finally, the letters of authority that Ezra bore with him were addressed 'to whom it may concern', (Ezra 7:21) rather than directly to the governor of the province to which Ezra was going. All this implies that there was no other civil authority at the time of Ezra's arrival. Albright³⁴¹ comments

"Nowhere in the Ezra memoirs proper is there a clear statement about who was then tirshatha (royal commissioner) of Judea".

This lack of reference to a governor (at the time of Ezra's return) implies that Ezra returned to Judah in a period when there was no governor. Therefore the possible dates of Ezra's return can be cross referenced with the dates of the known governors of the land, and any date where there is correspondence considered an unlikely one for Ezra's arrival.

One of the obvious periods when there was no governor, is the period before Nehemiah, recorded in part by Ezra 1-6. After Zerubbabel and Sheshbazzar, there is no mention of the name of a governor of Judah. Albright³⁴² says particularly of chapter four

"The data in Ezra 4 make it clear that the young community in Jerusalem was constantly being hampered in its development by the authorities of the

³⁴¹W.F.Albright *The Biblical Period from Abraham to Ezra* 94

³⁴²W.F.Albright *From the Stone age To Christianity* 324

Persian province of Samaria, who then controlled it directly, as shown by A. Alt"

Therefore during the period before 444 BCE, the province of Judah appears to have been ruled externally, with no local governor.

However this is not the only possible period when Judah had no governor. The time of Artaxerxes II also contains other possible gaps in the governorship of the province. Further, there appear to be examples of governors before Nehemiah. Therefore the entire pattern of governorship needs closer examination.

i. Nehemiah The first Governor

a/ Before Nehemiah

Samaria governed the province of Judah under the umbrella of the Satrap until Nehemiah's time. Upon Nehemiah's arrival, the province gained a limited independence, with its own governor under the Satrap. This change in policy partly explains the hostility that awaited Nehemiah's actions from the previous governor Sanballat of Samaria (Nehemiah 4:2), who would have now lost some of his realm. From that period on, Nehemiah and his successors governed Judah. This has been the standard position concerning the leadership of the province, and is still supported today by, e.g. Stern, and McEvenue.³⁴³ Nehemiah was therefore the first governor of the newly separated province of Judah.

b/ After Nehemiah

By the date 408 BCE, Bagoas became governor of Judah. This period of Bagoas' governorship therefore is not a period in which Ezra arrived in Jerusalem. The period between Nehemiah's governorship and the beginning of Bagoas' remains a possible time for Ezra's arrival, however. Bagoas came to office between 411 and 408 BCE, whilst Nehemiah was still governor until 433 BCE (Nehemiah 13:6). This points to a 428 BCE date for Ezra's arrival. A date that seems unlikely is 398 BCE, for until at least that time Bagoas was governor. However, 398 BCE cannot be ruled out definitively, for as Williamson³⁴⁴ concludes

"It should finally be observed that the evidence from Elephantine allows us to be certain only that Bagohi was governor in 408 BC during the reign of Darius II."

³⁴³E. Stern 'Seal- Impressions in the Achaemenid style in the province of Judah' *BASOR* 6-16

S.E.McEvenue 'The Political Structure In Judah from Cyrus to Nehemiah' *CBQ* 353-364

³⁴⁴ H.G.M.Williamson 'The Historical Value of Josephus' *Jewish Antiquities* xl 297-301' *JTS* 60

ii. Governors Before Nehemiah

However, Alt's suggestion that Judah was governed by Samaria until Nehemiah's arrival has been challenged more recently. Many now consider (Williamson, Widengren, Avigad)³⁴⁵ that there had been no change of policy with the arrival of Nehemiah. Instead, the office of governor of Judah continued in the province throughout the period of Cyrus through to the time of Nehemiah. If this is the case, then before the time of Nehemiah there was no certain gap in the office of governor of Judah, and therefore no certain gap into which Ezra could arrive.

Hoglund³⁴⁶ has assessed the Imperial position in Judah up to and including the period of Nehemiah. In his work he concludes that Judah was already a separate province in the fifth century before Nehemiah's arrival. Therefore it would have been likely to have had its own local governor subject to the Satrap. Hoglund's work draws upon a number of archaeological discoveries indicating differences in the usage of the word 'governor'. This suggests that all the dates are equally possible, for there is simply not enough information about the governors of any period, to suggest an exclusive period where there was no governor.

The line of governors therefore requires further investigation. To achieve that, all the evidence to a governor of Judah available requires examination, to reconstruct the political patterns of the time.

2. Evidence of the existence of other governors

i. Wadi ed-Daliyeh

Williamson³⁴⁷ points out that according to the Wadi ed-Daliyeh Papyri, the governor of Samaria Sanballat,

"was succeeded in this office by his direct descendants through four generations until the beginning of Hellenistic rule."

Cross³⁴⁸ says

"From the Papyri we can reconstruct the sequence of governors in Samaria"

Therefore, any unidentified references to governors of the area that we find for this period, relate to the area of Judah, not Samaria.

³⁴⁵H.G.M. Williamson 'The Governors of Judah Under The Persians' *TB* 59-82

G. Widengren 'The Persian Period' 510

N. Avigad 'More evidence on the Judean Post-Exilic Stamps' *IEJ* 52-58

³⁴⁶K. Hoglund reviewed in *Themelios* 19 No 2 11

³⁴⁷H.G.M. Williamson 'The Governors of Judah Under The Persians' *TB* 64

³⁴⁸F.M. Cross 'A Reconstruction of the Judean Restoration' *JBL* 5

ii. Nehemiah 5:14-19

In this text Nehemiah compares himself favourably with 'previous governors'. This only makes sense if he means 'previous governors of Judah'. His comparison is only significant if he is comparing himself with previous governors who could be expected to conform to the morals and practices of Judaism. Any comparison with the governors of surrounding regions would be invalid, as they could not be expected to live according to the same moral code. His comparison therefore indicates that there had been previous governors of Judah, within living memory of Nehemiah.

iii. Rehum's Appeal in Ezra 4

Rehum, described by Hoglund³⁴⁹ as holding

"clearly a significant administrative post in the imperial system"

evidently did not feel that Judah was under his jurisdiction, for he had to appeal to the King to stop what he felt was an unlawful rebuilding of Jerusalem's walls. Hoglund³⁵⁰ suggests that this proves that before Nehemiah's governorship,

"Samaria and those officials who governed out of Samaria, did not ordinarily possess jurisdiction over Jerusalem."

iv. The Elephantine Papyri

The Elephantine Papyri, show that between 411 and 408 BCE Sanballat was the governor of Samaria and Bagoas the governor of Judah. (The reading Bigvai occurs several times in Ezra and Nehemiah, though the Greek versions render his name Bagoses, or Bagoas.) He marks the last of the governors of significance to the debate, for his office would have reached close to the 398 BCE date. Unfortunately, the close of his office is not known. It may not reach as far as 398 BCE, and therefore it is possible that there was no governor in the seventh year of Artaxerxes II.

v. The title פַּחַח

The title פַּחַח given to Zerubbabel, is often translated as Governor (Hag 1.1, 2.2,21) However, following Alt's theory of Judean government this is translated more loosely to mean 'commissioner'. According to Winton Thomas³⁵¹ פַּחַח can be translated

"loosely to describe his function as commissioner charged with the task of rebuilding the temple, rather than as independent governor of a separate

³⁴⁹ K.Hoglund *Achaemenid Imperial Administration in Syria-Palestine and the Missions of Ezra and Nehemiah* 83

³⁵⁰ K.Hoglund *Achaemenid Imperial Administration in Syria-Palestine and the Missions of Ezra and Nehemiah* 84

³⁵¹ D.Winton Thomas *Archaeology and Old Testament Study* 350

area. The term is not so used of him in Ezra iii f., nor is it used of Sheshbazzar in Ezra i."

He considers that the reference to Zerubbabel as 'governor' does not give the phrase the same weight as when it refers to Nehemiah as 'governor'.

However, it seems that more recent evidence argues against this line of thought. Williamson³⁵² in a detailed discussion, points to more recent evidence from the Wadi ed-Daliyeh papyri, and evidence from bullae and seals, as published by Avigad³⁵³ which gives פָּחָה the meaning of governor in its fullest sense. This means that the reference in Haggai 1:1 to the office that Zerubbabel held might mean that Zerubbabel held the same authority and position as Nehemiah. Stern himself, generally accepting Alt's position, modifies it slightly, accepting Zerubbabel as a full governor, saying that it was *after him* that the province became ruled by Samaria.

However, Williamson³⁵⁴ considers that

"Stern has not been able to explain why, if the whole area was administered as a single province at this time, there should be any distinction of the kind he has described between Judah and Samaria."

There is therefore evidence to suggest a governorship for Judah in the time of Zerubbabel, and no evidence to suggest that authority then shifted to Samaria, until the time of Nehemiah. Alt's thesis therefore seems suspect.

vi. References To A Governor

A word translated as 'governor' (פָּחָה) has been found on inscriptions on seals, bullae, and jar handles, within Judah. There are personal names found, appearing along with the word פָּחָה, which probably indicate the title of governor.³⁵⁵ As these references date from before the period of Nehemiah, it seems increasingly likely that Nehemiah was not the first of a line of governors, but merely a new one.

vii. Bulla No. 5 Mentions Elnathan

This Bulla in Avigad's collection³⁵⁶ bears the personal name Elnathan, followed by פָּחָה. Williamson³⁵⁷ argues that this could be translated as Peha - governor. If this is true, then we have a discovery of a governor of Judah hitherto unknown. Avigad dated this Bulla to

³⁵²H.G.M.Williamson 'The Governors of Judah Under The Persians' TB 59-82

³⁵³N.Avigad *Bullae and Seals from a Post exilic Judean Archive* 6-61

³⁵⁴H.G.M.Williamson 'The Governors of Judah Under The Persians' TB 63

³⁵⁵see the detailed discussion of the meaning of the word that has been seen in connection with these names, in H.G.M.Williamson 'The Governors of Judah Under The Persians' TB 59-82

³⁵⁶N.Avigad *'Bullae and seals from a Post-Exilic Judean Archive* 6-61

³⁵⁷H.G.M.Williamson 'The Governors of Judah Under The Persians' TB 69-70

the 6th C. BCE on palaeographic evidence. Such evidence is very frail, relying on the forms of script passing out of favour uniformly, and not being retained at later periods in isolated cases.

Other sources help date this reference. Another seal (Seal 124) in the same collection which bears the legend 'belonging to Shelomith maidservant of Elnathan the governor'³⁵⁸ possibly identifies a lady called Shelomith with the Shelomith of 1 Chronicles 3.19, a daughter of Zerubbabel. This identification is possible, because both are women, and both are named, which is comparatively rare among genealogies and seals, and both held an official position (in the case of the seal, that Shelomith owned a seal of her own). Whilst not conclusive, this may suggest that the two references are identifiable as one person. Drawing upon this identification, the dating of that particular collection of seals may be made to a generation after Zerubbabel. This means that the seal relating to Elnathan would also date to that period. This implies a date for Elnathan, as governor of Judah, possibly Zerubbabel's successor. Hoglund considers this persuasive when he says

"Elnathan, in marrying the daughter of Zerubbabel became the full successor of Zerubbabel as governor in the late sixth century BCE. In that he ruled after Zerubbabel, Elnathan represents at least one figure who administered Yehud between Zerubbabel and Nehemiah."

viii. Yeho'ezer and Ahazi

There are other names that are also possible governors of Judah around this time. However, the date ascribable to these references is even less certain than that of Elnathan's reference. Williamson³⁵⁹ discounts the relevance of these names for producing a complete list of governors, for the following reason.

"Avigad's *Bullae and Seals* 35, would also include Yeho'ezer and Ahazi, known from Ramat Rahel, as governors before Nehemiah. Because the Ramat Rahel stamps come from a refuse dump, however ... the date of this material is even less certain than in the case of Elnathan, and so cannot be used in evidence at this point."

However it does open the possibilities of the existence of further Judean governors before Nehemiah, and therefore makes Alt's position more difficult to defend. The most reasonable conclusion therefore is that there were governors in the land throughout the period of restoration, but that not all are known today. It makes the discovery of a time when there was no governor, an even more likely indicator of the date of Ezra's arrival.

³⁵⁸ K.Hoglund *Achaemenid Imperial Administration in Syria-Palestine and the Missions of Ezra and Nehemiah* 81

³⁵⁹ H.G.M.Williamson 'The Governors of Judah Under The Persians' *TB* 77 fn.56,

ix. Ramat Rahel

At the tell of Ramat Rahel, the Old Testament site of Beth Hakkerim; we find further seal impressions. Some of them bear the inscription יְהוֹאֶזֶר . This according to Winton Thomas³⁶⁰

"could be an Aramaic-Hebrew form of the word *phwh* = province (from the root *phh*, Akkadian *pahatu*), meaning 'governor' or 'governorship'. ... If this is correct, then we have here the first epigraphic evidence from Palestine for a governor of Judah under Persian rule."

As these stamps belong to the 4th C. BCE it seems that Judean governors continued using the royal palace down to that period. These people would include someone called Yeho'ezer who owned such a stamp. This may be corroborating evidence for the existence of Yeho'ezer as governor, but it is too vague to be greatly significant.

Summary

Drawing all the possible governors together, the following represents a possible list of governors of Judah.

- From Cyrus (538) to the beginning of the reign of Darius I (522) - Zerubbabel
- The generation after Zerubbabel
 - Elnathan
 - Ahazi?
 - Yeho'ezer?
- 445 BC Nehemiah
- 408 BC Bagoas

Conclusion

The existence of governors before Nehemiah does not necessarily invalidate the basic presuppositions of the section. There appear to have been governors both before and after Nehemiah. However, there are gaps in the list of governors that we have at present, and the text of Ezra appears to indicate that Ezra fits one of these interregnums.

Therefore all the dates when a governor is known to have been in Jerusalem are unlikely dates for Ezra's arrival. This includes Nehemiah's period, which extends to about 432 BCE (Nehemiah 13:6) and includes the time of Bagoas' governorship after 411/408 BCE.

Unfortunately, the close of Bagoas' governorship is not known. Therefore, Ezra could have come in 398 BCE after Bagoas, or in 458 or 428 BCE after Nehemiah had retired. Discovering further governors, the final dating of Bagoas' office, or the dating of such as Elnathan, Ahazi, or Yeho'ezer would add to our knowledge here. Until that point, there are no specific conclusions that can be made from this section.

³⁶⁰D. Winton Thomas *Archaeology and Old Testament Study* 174

SUMMARY

From an examination of these sections, there is no quick and obvious conclusion. Certain indicators appear to favour one date for Ezra's return, and other indicators appear to favour a different date. Again, none of these indications amounts to proof, or even a strong probability.

The indications that have arisen so far however, are summarised as follows.

Section	Ezra's arrival in ...		
	458 BCE	428 BCE	398 BCE
Section A		no conclusions can be drawn	
Section B		no conclusions can be drawn	
Section C	possible	possible	less likely
Section D		no conclusions can be drawn	
Section E	possible	possible	less likely
Section F	possible	less likely	possible
Section G		no conclusions can be drawn	

From this, it appears that the most probable date of arrival for Ezra is in 458 BCE, before Nehemiah. The 428 BCE date then seems next most likely. Section F does not support that date, but points to a date of 398 BCE. However, it was noted that the conclusions from that section were less well attested from archaeological sources. Therefore the suggestion from 4E regarding 428 being more likely than 398 BCE is preferable to the opposite suggestion in 4F. No other section provides good evidence for a 398 BCE date.

The conclusion therefore from this chapter is that Ezra arrived in the reign of Artaxerxes I. However, this could have been in 458, or 428 BCE.

CHAPTER FIVE

The topics discussed in the previous chapters, and the conclusions drawn in each of these chapters now need to be evaluated together. As a firm conclusion has not been possible in any individual section or chapter, this evaluation will take the form of balancing the probabilities assigned to the various tentative conclusions in each chapter.

There are three areas in which conclusions can be made as a result of this study

1. Firm Conclusions

i. Nehemiah's date

One of the results of archaeological research is that the date of Nehemiah's arrival in Jerusalem has been established at 445 BCE. This makes the identification of the ordering of the two reformers simpler, and has enabled effectively only three dates for Ezra's arrival to be considered, namely 458, 428, and 398 BCE. This means that in the first case, Ezra precedes Nehemiah; though there is a small overlap in their ministries at the end of Ezra's ministry. The second date means that Nehemiah came first, followed closely towards the end of his ministry by Ezra. The third date of 398 BCE means that neither saw the other at all, but that Nehemiah came to Jerusalem considerably earlier than Ezra. The fixing of Nehemiah's date now means that there is no possibility (as was considered in chapter one) that the editor transposed the order of the two reformers. Saley's work casts an insufficient element of doubt over the conclusion, to cause a reassessment.

ii. Preponderance of Theorising

Following on from the previous point, it is also true that the reasons for adopting any particular position have in the past been more theoretical than evidential. To challenge theories and traditions, actual hard evidence is needed, as is the case in other areas of study of the Ancient Near East. Kitchen, an Egyptologist, compares this theoretical approach with the method of study in his discipline where he says³⁶¹

"in these disciplines, facts have a primary value and theories are mainly subordinated to them."

To finally come to a resolution of the issue, the study needs new evidence, carefully interpreted, rather than new theories. New evidence however is scarce in this field, though some has been forthcoming with helpful results (e.g. the governors of Judah, the date of Nehemiah's arrival).

³⁶¹K.A.Kitchen *Ancient Orient And The Old Testament* 22

Summary

This does not look very encouraging, but reflects the state of study at present. However, the study arising from the more recent literary critical approaches, and evidence from archaeology (bullae and seals, or the Samaria papyri) is encouraging. Nevertheless, at present, the evidence remains unconvincing for any particular date of Ezra's arrival, though Nehemiah's date of arrival has been defined.

2. The Most Probable Dating Scenario

It is necessary now to draw together the inferences from the indicators that have been discussed in the previous three chapters. It is the contention of this thesis that given the lack of any conclusive evidence the only way forward is to consider trends, directions which the evidence tends to favour more often than another.

The following table summarises the conclusions of each section, in order to produce an assessment of which of the three dates best fits all the sections considered. The figures below are cumulative totals of the summary conclusion tables given at the end of Chapters 2, 3, and 4. There are 24 sections in chapters two, three, and four, nine sections come to no specific conclusion; therefore they all appear in the 'no conclusions' line. The other sections have been divided according to the simple distinction as to whether they are 'possible' or 'less likely'.

The purpose of such a simple distinction is to try and avoid fine distinctions where detailed value judgements are required. The simpler the distinction, the less presuppositional bias can be introduced. Categories such as likely, more likely, or extremely unlikely - which would give weight to certain categories - would also allow a greater amount of presuppositional bias. The purpose of the thesis is to obtain the overview, from the most distant standpoint possible within the parameters established in chapter one.

Table 1

Probability Level	Ezra's arrival in ...		
	458 BCE	428 BCE	398 BCE
Possible	13	8	5
Less Likely	2	7	10
No conclusions	9	9	9
TOTAL	24	24	24

This information may be more readily assimilated as percentage values. In order to do this, it is first necessary to remove the figures for 'no conclusions' as they are no longer significant to the debate. This means that the total number of sections that are significant is now only 15³⁶². The table can now be reconstituted without that line.

Table 2

Probability Level	Ezra's arrival in ...		
	458 BCE	428 BCE	398 BCE
Possible	13	8	5
Less Likely	2	7	10
TOTAL	15	15	15

It is now possible to calculate meaningful percentages

Table 3

Probability Level	Ezra's arrival in ...					
	458 BCE	%	428 BCE	%	398 BCE	%
Possible	13	86.7	8	53.3	5	33.3
Less Likely	2	13.3	7	46.7	10	66.7
TOTAL	100		100		100	

These figures, while they look extremely accurate must not be treated in that way. They are the product of a simple yes/no decision over fifteen areas of discussion. The value attributed to them here may be different to that attributed by other readers of the work, and therefore there will be a variance of individual conclusions. However, for the moment, the figures above will be used to consider the most likely date of Ezra's arrival in Jerusalem.

The following summary statements may be made

a/ A date of 458 BCE

Ezra's arrival appears possible at this date often, and over a wide range of considerations.

b/ A date of 428 BCE

³⁶²sections 2B,2C,2D,3A,3B,3C,3D,3F,3H,3I,3J,3K,4C,4F,4G

This date for Ezra's arrival often appears a good possibility, but regularly appears less likely.

c/ A date of 398 BCE

This appears to be the least likely solution to the difficulties over the dating of the two reformers, when considering the wide range of issues.

From this evidence, it is possible to draw an initial conclusion that the evidence suggests that the two reformers came in the reign of Artaxerxes I. This is based in part on the fact that 66.7% of the sections indicate that Ezra is unlikely to have returned to Jerusalem in 398 BCE. Some of these sections are more significant than others, though attributing a weighting to the sections becomes more of a value judgement than an objective exercise. Instead of attributing weighting, merely considering the quantity of sections suggesting this conclusion in relation to the others brings its own significance to the debate, and obviates the need to attempt to determine how significant these sections are (it would take at minimum, four complete sections to point to 398 and against 458) before the 398 BCE date could be considered to be as likely as the 458 BCE date. This represents a 27 % swing of opinion, a large change, and correspondingly it makes the position unlikely.

Having concluded this, there is still a choice between the two dates within the reign of Artaxerxes I, and here the solution is more difficult. According to the figures in table 3, 458 BCE is 86.7% possible, whereas 428 BCE is 53.3%. These values are much closer, and a smaller change of opinion could render these interchangeably possible. It is therefore worth looking a little more closely at the evidence for the two dates.

a/ Evidence against 428 BCE

The sections 2B, 2C, 2D (all relating to the literary structure within Ezra-Nehemiah), 3C (the reference to Artaxerxes in Ezra 7:7), 3I (The reforms of Ezra and Nehemiah), 3J (the powers granted to them both), and 4F (the historical background in Ezra), all point to a 458 rather than a 428 BCE date, as they all suggest that a 428 BCE date is not likely. None of the sections carry a great weight of argument, though it needs to be borne in mind that evaluating the relative strength of each argument is very subjective. It is true that these sections are not in themselves decisive, rather that they make the 428 BCE date a little more difficult to uphold. They therefore form a cumulative argument in an area where there is no certainty, and little to promote any one view over another. Additional to this, a comparison of 3B and 3C are helpful. Section 3B concludes that the context of Ezra 7:7-8 makes a date of 428 BCE difficult. Section 3C considering the interpretation of Ezra 7:7-8 is seen to allow a 428 BCE date, but not a 398 BCE date. A comparison of these two sections together suggests that a 458 BCE date is most likely.

b/ Evidence against 458 BCE

Alternatively, within the examination of each section, the 458 BCE date also has many points that have been raised against it, which might then be considered to support the 428 BCE date³⁶³. Many of these have been found to really have no real contribution to the debate (as for example the question over the population of Jerusalem in section 3M). However, there are two areas where a date of 458 BCE is unlikely, i.e. 3H (the thirteen year gap) and 3K (the wall building). These both suggest a 428 BCE date.

c/ Reconsidering the 398 BCE sections

Reconsidering the sections where 398 BCE was considered possible, four of the five sections (3B - Artaxerxes in Ezra 7:7-8, 3I - Nehemiah's reforms, 3J - the powers granted to both, and 4F - historical references in the book of Ezra), suggest that the date for Ezra's return is either 458, or 398 BCE. Therefore, having discounted the 398 BCE date, the sections mainly point to the 458 BCE date. Only one section (3K - the failed wall building attempt) suggests that if the 398 BCE date is incorrect, then a 428 BCE date should be considered. This suggests that the lead that 458 BCE has, is understated if anything, though the numbers remain as in table three. A note of caution needs to be added about the mathematics here. The numbers cannot simply be added to table three; for they are already included within the figures. That would produce a double counting, as these sections each point to two possible alternatives and are already included in the figures. However, the way each section leans removing 398 BCE from consideration is still significant.

It appears that from an examination of the various sections; the 458 BCE date for Ezra's arrival in Jerusalem is more likely to be correct than any other possible date. Indeed, the sections (once the 398 BCE date is set aside) indicate a 458 BCE date 86.7% of the time. Only 53.3% of the time is a 428/438 BCE date considered a likely possibility. 458 BCE is therefore the preferred date of Ezra's arrival.

The same evidence examined by others will produce different probability outcomes because of different inherent presuppositions, and possibly therefore, another conclusion. However, in order to alter the conclusion in favour of e.g. a 428 BCE date, a large re-assignment of values has to be contemplated. Two sections would have to reverse opinion making a 458 BCE date now unlikely (where in this thesis it is likely) and two sections reverse making 428 BCE likely (where in this thesis they are unlikely) before the two dates 458 and 428 were even only equally possible. For the two dates to switch

³⁶³ though only two sections have actually concluded that the arguments make the date less likely

positions, and for 428 BCE to be 86.7% likely, and 458 BCE to be 53.3% likely, the simplest change requires four complete sections to reverse opinion for both dates. Such a movement requires a very strong presuppositional shift.

It is the contention of the author that even making allowance for variation from the figures given within the thesis, significantly more often than any other possibility, the date of 458 BCE for the arrival of Ezra is the date that fits all the evidence best.

3. Areas For Further Study

There are several open questions in this area of study, whose resolution would dramatically clarify the possibilities given here.

- the contemporaneity (or otherwise) of the two reformers
- the actual location for the text of Nehemiah 8-10
- the date of the editorial work
- the extent of authorship in relation to the book of Chronicles
- the wall building episode of Ezra 4
- the names of governors in Judah before and after Nehemiah
- a list of High Priests

Should archaeology discover the answer to any of these questions, then, depending on the way that the evidence is interpreted along with present knowledge, such findings potentially could radically alter the weightings assigned to the present sections.

However, without further concrete evidence, it is the contention of this thesis that on present levels of knowledge, the best approach to the study of the relative dating of Ezra and Nehemiah's arrival in Jerusalem, is to take all the indications in their totality. In doing this, evidence that is equivocal in any particular section, when considered as a totality assumes a definite direction. The evidence in totality points to Ezra's arrival in the reign of Artaxerxes I, in the seventh year, namely 458 BCE, before the arrival of Nehemiah in 445 BCE.

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